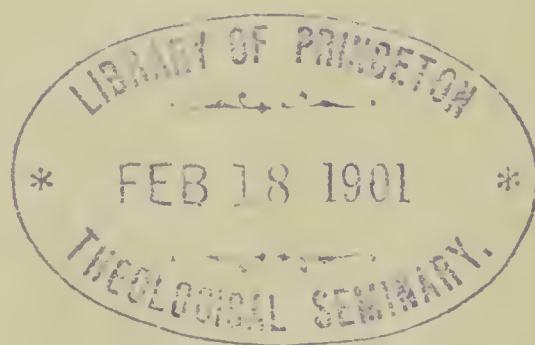


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# HOLY MATRIMONY

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LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

39 Paternoster Row.: London

New York, and Bombay

1900

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## EDITORS' PREFACE

THE object of the Oxford Library of Practical Theology is to supply some carefully considered teaching on matters of Religion to that large body of devout laymen, who desire instruction, but are not attracted by the learned treatises which appeal to the theologian. One of the needs of the time would seem to be, to translate the solid theological learning, of which there is no lack, into the vernacular of everyday practical religion; and while steering a course between what is called plain teaching on the one hand and erudition on the other, to supply some sound and readable instruction, to those who require it, on the subjects included under the common title 'The Christian Religion,' that they may be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear.

The Editors, while not holding themselves precluded from suggesting criticisms, have regarded their proper task as that of editing, and accordingly they have not interfered with the responsibility of each writer for his treatment of his own subject.

W. C. E. N.

D. S.

‘We perceive’ . . . in marriage, ‘how closely religion and natural life are intertwined.’

‘Marriage is the precious foundation and corner-stone of all society.’

## PREFACE

WITH regard to the treatment of the subject of this book, nothing need be said by way of preface. The book speaks for itself. Various causes, which need not be particularised, have delayed its appearance. I owe every recognition to the patience and kindness of the Editors and the Publishers. No pains have been spared to treat what seemed to me the chief points of the subject as clearly and fully as space would permit. Of course I cannot flatter myself that there are no failures in doing so, but I have done as well as I have been able.

I have to acknowledge my obligations to the following works which have been made use of, referred to, or quoted: Keble's *Tract on Marriage and Divorce*; Maurice's *Social Morality*; Westcott's *Social Aspects of Christianity*; Newman's *Grammar of Assent*; Allies's *Formation of Christendom*; Döllinger's *First Age of the Church*, and *Judenthum und Heidenthum*; Luthardt's *Moral Truths*; Lecky's *History of European Morals*;

Church's *Gifts of Civilisation*; Watkins's *Holy Matrimony*; Luckock's *History of Marriage*; and others.

In any case where I have believed myself to be quoting the words of others, although it has been from memory and I have been unable to recall the source, inverted commas have been used.

I have to give my warmest thanks to the Editors for their valuable suggestions, and to two friends who have revised and corrected my ms. throughout with great pains, at a time when a pressing call of duty has hindered me from doing so myself. I cannot thank them sufficiently.

In our own age and our own country the question of marriage is necessarily much before the minds of men. It may be said to lie at the root of all social wellbeing and right religious feeling. I shall be thankful if I have contributed, in the slightest possible way even, to impress upon any of my fellow-Churchmen and fellow-countrymen its supremely sacred and serious character.

W. J. KNOX LITTLE.

May 26, 1900.

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HOLY MATRIMONY



## CHAPTER I

### THE IMPORTANCE OF MARRIAGE

THE question of Marriage is all-important. It stands at the very beginning of human history. It lies at the root of human society. It has been felt that it is right, as it is common in Christendom, to speak of 'Holy Matrimony,' although this peculiar expression is not used of any other of our natural relations, and this fact is a kind of instinctive testimony to the moral importance of marriage.

The double nature of man is recognised in marriage, and this recognition witnesses to the importance of the whole question. Man is a creature of two worlds. On the one hand, man is an animal. He is the highest and noblest of the creatures of the animal creation. He has desires and needs and instincts like them. Like them, he is born, and grows, and sinks towards his decline, and dies. Like them, his kind is increased, and he passes on his nature to generations which follow when he is gone. But in the material soil of his marvellous body is also planted the seed of a spiritual being. Man is a spirit. He stands in relation not only to this world, but also to the unseen. He has a sense of the passing character of all that is, but also a sense

of eternity. He is conscious of the duty and power of using the higher nature to raise the lower. He feels the need of companionship, of the completing of his life by one of his race.

‘Not like to like, but like in difference.’<sup>1</sup>

And so, in numberless expressions of his higher thought in his noblest efforts in literature, woman appears as the embodiment of the ideal, fulfilling and elevating the life of man. The true relation of man with woman must then be of the last importance. This relation is fully expressed only in marriage.

No age, more than our own, bears witness to this. Whatever faults and sins there have been in the chequered history of a fallen race, still, in a vast mass of moral questions, there has been advance. Human nature, we know, is not man *or* woman, but man *and* woman; and the *idea of humanity* is the thought which, more perhaps than any other, has governed this age. This is seen in the immense development—wise or unwise—of philanthropic effort even in the last fifty years. All great movements of recent times have had this idea as their moving spring. The conception of perfection most strongly evident in our age, is the perfection of human nature—by education, by culture, by the use of scientific discoveries, by social readjustment—and this perfection is aimed at by numbers of earnest people who endeavour to awaken others to what is known as *altruism*, *i.e.* to a true realisation of the idea of humanity. In this reawakened and advancing interest in the welfare of the race, the deepest and most difficult problems rise up into the relation of man

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson, *The Princess*, vii.

to woman and woman to man, and marriage has ever been, in some form or other, an effort towards a true expression of that relation ; hence its importance.

How all-important the question is, not merely for those who are or may be married, but for all, is seen when we consider it (1) in its more *personal*, and (2) in its more *social* aspects.

(1) In the more personal aspects of the question, it connects itself with some of the deepest, and yet most common and most universal mysteries of our being. Whatever does so must be of serious interest to all.

It has the closest connection with the mystery of *life*. There are desires which have, under certain circumstances, to be restrained or suppressed. The possession of a desire, however, cannot be wrong. When we come into the world equipped with a certain outfit of desires, we may be sure that the use of that outfit is intended by God, unless there be some positive law to the contrary.

The desire strongest in man is the desire for life. 'Youth,' it has been said, 'is one long prayer for life.' There is a longing for life always. Even in advancing years, when weakness or pain utter their prophetic warnings of decay, there is still, beneath all, the yearning for a lasting life. This yearning is one of the most mysterious things in our being. It has ramifications everywhere. It runs up into mysteries which the shallow nature or the unthinking mind does not touch. It is a deep thing, a high thing, a very awful and moving thing—this desire for life.

Life itself is a thing so deep and so mysterious that we can never, perhaps, fully grasp its significance. We see, it has been again and again pointed out, the signs



or marks of its existence. We see these signs in all the varied ranks of lower or higher life; we are conscious of the symbols and indications of a marvellous presence, but to the presence itself we cannot penetrate. The exquisite beauty of the natural world appeals to us in a way quite inexplicable. 'Deep calleth unto deep'—that we know. The deep of *life* in nature to the greater deep of life in man. Everything whispers of it or sings of it, but the marvellous thing itself, the most careful analysis has never revealed.

There is in nature and, above all, in man a constant cry for life:—

'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,  
Oh life, not death, for which we pant;  
More life, and fuller, that I want.'<sup>1</sup>

It is truly enough said that life, in its real meaning, is unknown; that it is only by degrees that its wealth of possibilities and its unsuspected powers are opened out. For all the powers so wonderfully presented before us in the world—such powers as feeling, with its sharp pains and exquisite pleasures; and thought, with its fever of penetration and strength of distant flight; and love, with its unbending energies and all-prevailing influence—are wrapt up and enfolded in life. We know there has been felt something of the mystery of personal life, of the individual life with its special plan, its own limitations, its peculiar destiny. And we know how, in a hundred ways, the individual life is connected with the vast and varying expressions of life everywhere in the world; how one life is distinct, individual, with undeveloped possibilities and incalculable forces, and yet how it is not alone, but intertwines

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson, *The Two Voices*.

itself with all around it in a richly endowed and most mysterious world.

Men have been driven to fancy how the unborn seem to cry for light, for the opportunity of action, for the chance of developing yet fresh, though dependent powers. Men have been unable not to feel the actual delight of existence. Whatever the theories of pessimism, whatever the wails of sorrow in a suffering world, yet sometime or other, as a revolt against the tyranny of sorrow, or the trials of suffering, voices are heard in mankind recalling the fact that the deepest thing is life, and life meant for joy :—

‘ Oh ! the joy, the joy of living,  
 Oh ! the brightness of breaking day,  
 Oh ! the songs of the birds at the sundawn,  
 Oh ! the bloom and the scent of the may.’

Sometime or other, at any rate in all healthy natures, this positive joy is felt. There is an instinctive delight in the sense of powers enwrapt in life, of which the young soul is only half conscious, a delight growing as the conscience becomes clearer. A suspicion haunts humanity, and grows to a conviction in those who think at all deeply, and exists in some measure even in those who think the least, that there are high and unmeasured purposes which ought to be recognised and followed in life. In almost all natures, surely there is a sense of delight—noticed even in the intelligent little boy or girl at school—in the possession of faculties which are gradually opening out, and enabling the possessor to taste the sweets of knowledge and love. And in natures where care and guidance have helped the soul to realise, even in simplest things, its powers of communion with the unseen, and of conscious inter-



course with God, the sense of the vast capacities of life become clearer still.

When experience brings its sad, perhaps, yet strengthening lessons, when advancing years in this world enable man or woman to rejoice, amidst whatever cares, in the wealth that time has brought them—great opportunities, new views of things, dear objects of affection—the soul looking back can see how these lay potentially in that young fresh life which seemed to feel little, like the healthy young animal it was, but the splendour of the sundawn and the freshness of the breeze, and the pleasure of exercising young limbs and shouting songs of delight—for in the healthy young animal lived and lay the powers of a life richer, more varied and lofty and spiritual, taking its root indeed in the soil of physical nature.

Men feel the dignity and greatness of life when in each gift of mysterious life there is seen 'the basis of a character and a career.' We may not fully understand what life is, but this we know—where it is there is the power to develop, the power to go on from mere beginnings, and in these very beginnings the power to influence in some degree unmeasured destinies.

From this sense of the solemnity and sacredness of life, men who have any religious feeling can scarcely fail to feel the vast responsibility of the power of transmitting life. If this be so, not only may the thought of the vocation for marriage in the future go far to inspire the young to self-mastery and self-improvement—for mankind is so closely linked together, that if we would influence our children we must improve ourselves—but there is a further consequence. To serious people it must be of vast importance that the

awful and majestic gift of life should be transmitted under the conditions laid down by Religion.

The importance of Holy Matrimony, then, is evident when we consider the seriousness and sacredness of life.

(2) It is seen also no less clearly in its bearing on civil society.

The social question is most interesting and most necessary for us to consider. Whatever varying views have been held with regard to it, it has always exercised the minds of thinking men. Marriage deeply affects this question, for the family is the foundation of civil society. For the health and preservation of civil society everything must be done to protect family life. Men have tried to construct theories of society, beginning with the individual. This is a false method. We are not, as a matter of fact, isolated individuals. Each finds himself or herself in the world as the child of two parents. We begin life in a real *relation* to others, and the well-being of society depends upon right relation to others being fostered and preserved. Rousseau himself, notwithstanding the many extravagant theories broached in his *Emile*, was clear-sighted enough to perceive this. He was making a great effort, with whatever mistakes, towards a more entire simplicity of life, and he was wise enough to see that reform in social life must depend upon reform in the life of the family. The family is the first school of that discipline of thought and temper which is absolutely necessary if society is to work well. Wherever the necessary bonds of family life are, in any way, relaxed, or its foundations shaken, society itself must suffer; and hence, when through death or misfortune or sin family life is unable to

exercise its normal influence, the State finds it necessary to supply the want in whatever measure it can.

Man, in fact, is formed for companionship with his fellows. If that companionship is to be what it ought to be for the healthy development of society, he has early to learn a right exercise of authority and obedience, of trust and dependence, of duty and readiness to help others. There are strong and dangerous tendencies in our nature leading to selfishness and isolation; if society is to be what it ought to be, these have to be tempered and restrained, and this can be done in the natural and loving way in which it ought to be done nowhere but within the circle of home. All the relations which are included in home life are, in fact, the expressions of the essential relations of mankind. It is for this reason that all moralists have felt that an unfailing test of the condition of society is to be found in the estimate of family life formed by any people.

The importance of marriage and all connected with it is more than ever deeply imprinted on our minds by those leading ideas of Christianity which make the Christian religion so important a teacher of moral life. Christianity insists upon our condition in this world being that of a race which has suffered from some aboriginal disaster. We are constantly reminded by our religion that human nature is by no means a mass of corruption (as some imperfect forms of Christianity have represented it to be), but that it is, though a ruin, a splendid ruin. Our religion teaches us that a hope of retrieving our misfortune comes to us from the cross of Christ; that 'however much we may have to correct or amend, the way of amendment is still one of our unforfeited possessions.'



But the way of retrieving the disaster, and the way of forgiveness for the fault, are not shown to us by nature. *There*, everything appears unbending and inexorable, and consequence appears to follow cause with an iron and heartless consistency. They are revealed by the Christian religion. According to its teaching, evil is not natural to man, and it can be overcome; there is so close a bond between the Eternal Word and human nature, of which Holy Marriage is the expression and symbol in this world, that marriage should be guarded by the strongest safeguards; and to say that men should think of it the highest and noblest thoughts, is only another way of saying that they should be faithful to Christianity, which thus sets its seal on the importance of marriage.

Again, the Christian religion insists on the close kinship, we may say brotherhood, that exists in the human race, and especially between those who are in the Church of Christ in this world; and that, as regards the unseen world, each is preparing himself here for an immortal and incorruptible life; that 'all that belongs to the fulness of his nature, all that answers to his continuous growth, all that he gathers round it from day to day in habit and action, all that goes to make up that mysterious sum of powers, passions, senses, feelings, imitations, which he calls his body, is part of what shall be.' Such beliefs as these are eminently important for social wellbeing, and these beliefs can never be fully carried out unless men have a firm grip of the seriousness and importance of marriage and all that surrounds it.

It is a remarkable fact, pointing in the same direction, that wild revolutionists, and all who have

tried to slacken the bonds of society, have been unfriendly to Holy Marriage. It was so in the wilder moments of the French Revolution. Extreme socialism, which would destroy the existing basis of society, has been driven by inexorable logic to support the monstrous notion of community of wives; but men have very soon felt that this would be injurious to the State and to healthy conditions of population. It is natural that powers of evil, and the forces, whether political or social, which tend to the disintegration of society, should be characterised by antagonism to domestic life. All more serious thinkers on human advancement have ever felt the immense danger involved in any injury to the family; have ever felt like Horace:—

‘Fecunda culpae secula nuptias  
primum inquinavere et genus et domos;  
hoc fonte derivata clades  
in patriam populumque fluxit.’<sup>1</sup>

And all this points to the same conclusion: Whether from true thoughts of the serious mystery of life, and the responsibility involved in the use of the power of transmitting life, or from the natural need of rightly regulated fellowship and companionship for man, or from the light thrown upon man’s condition and destiny by the Christian revelation, or from the testimony of revolutionists in their attack upon the restraints of domestic life, or from the serious dangers to civil society which come from any tampering with

<sup>1</sup> ‘’Twas generations fruitful of crime that first polluted wedlock, race and home: hence sprang a flood of calamity to whelm our country and our people.’—Godley’s translation, *Odes*, iii. 6, 17-20.

right regulations as to family life, as well as the incalculable blessings which flow to it from a due respect to those relations,—it becomes certain that we cannot well over-estimate the importance of everything that affects marriage.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RELIGIOUS ASPECT OF THE FAMILY

THE importance of Holy Matrimony and its bearing on human society is most clearly realised when we consider the family. This cannot fail to be taken into account in any rational view of human nature. It gains however a graver seriousness and a deeper meaning when it is considered in the light of religion. The need of companionship of man with woman, and the right conditions of such companionship, give, of course, to marriage its great interest and dignity; but that dignity is raised and that interest increased when it is remembered that, religiously speaking, the family, as properly constituted, depends upon marriage.

Religion illuminates two important facts of our existence. It has brought into prominence the singleness and separateness of every living soul; and consequently, the truth of individual responsibility, and the importance of the action of the individual will. If this were all, we should learn each to make himself the centre of all things, and we should fall into the mistake of some social moralists of attempting to construct society out of the individual. But it is not all; there is another fact of the highest importance, that is, the



fact of heredity. We are closely connected with all who have preceded us in the journey of life; we hardly know to what extent we are indebted to them for what we possess and for what we are, whether for evil or for good.

Anyhow, our very existence is conditioned by this fact, and if we are to take any true measure of that existence, such a fact cannot be ignored. We may, indeed we do, feel our separate personality; but we do not find ourselves alone and independent when we wake up to our life in this world. Each one of us begins by being a member of a family; every one of us finds himself in a relationship to two human beings, a father and a mother, and he cannot enter upon life without *that* relationship existing, as *the* primary fact with which he has to do.

As religious people, we say that this is according to the law of God. Religion teaches us that God is a God of order, and that certain great facts of life are ordered by Him on regular methods, which we call laws. It is then one of God's laws that every child must have two parents, and by the establishment of this law He indicates the religious foundation of the family.

But more than that. By an observation of human life and by the study of religion, we become aware that in this God reveals to us much of His own nature. The Christian revelation teaches us that in the one substantial life of the one God, there are three Subsistences or Persons—as the language of the Church is—and that therefore within the Being of the God we worship there are eternal relations, an eternal fellowship. The necessary relations of the family, relations

which we do not choose, but *must* accept, are a natural manifestation of this Divine fact, and by it their seriousness and sacredness is illuminated; we feel, from it, how real is the religious aspect of the family, and therefore how more than ever sacred and dignified is Holy Marriage.

Then, further, there may be and there are calls to a single life. There are, of course, as we know, lives which from circumstances or from duties cannot be other than single; nevertheless, it remains a fact that, speaking of humanity broadly, a single life is an incomplete life. Human nature is not man *or* woman; it is man *and* woman. Each, alone, expresses an incomplete idea of human nature; the relationship of husband and wife when ordered according to God's law expresses the complete idea of man. We know that in modern times, owing to social difficulties, owing very often also to a faulty view of the need of comforts in life, it has become more and more the fashion, and indeed more and more necessary, to help men and women to stand alone; still, without the rightly ordered influence of each upon each the nature of each is incomplete. Each can offer its own tribute of service which the other cannot offer, and so the nature of each is expanded, enlarged, raised, purified, completed by the other. Exaggerated efforts have sometimes been made—not only to help woman to stand alone, when that is necessary and to a great extent inevitable—but to encourage woman to forget the special gifts of her womanliness, and to play at being a kind of man. All such attempts can hardly prevail for very long; but they are sure to be an injury to the human race. It must never be forgotten that, ordinarily speaking,

completed human nature is to be found in the union of man and woman according to God's law. In this union, when it is rightly effected, there are several characteristics recognised by religion. It is meant to include and to show forth absolute trust, entire self-surrender, a thorough-going faithfulness; and so to be the outward sign or representation in this life of the wonderful fact that God has not been content without a real union with creation, without complete human and Divine communion, as shown forth by the Incarnation of the Eternal Word. The Church on the whole has felt, and probably feels more every day, that the union of God with His created Universe through Christ is a Divine fact of the widest significance. The more this is felt, the more light seems to be thrown upon the mysterious sayings of Holy Scripture in regard to the 'restitution of all things,' and 'the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain together.' In spite of the enormous power of evil, we are constantly reminded that there are hopes and possibilities for the world beyond our imagination. We are led to hope for a time when life will triumph without the companionship of death, when 'there will be that which will make up for all losses, and recompense all toil, and obliterate all sufferings, and efface the memory of even shame.' These mysterious truths, to the depth of which we cannot fully penetrate, depend upon that wonderful Divine counsel of God's union with created things, of which the setting forth is Holy Marriage. This, then, is the crowning relationship; and it depends upon choice. By it, all human relationships are elevated and extended. What is needed for the well-being of society, and indeed for existence—equality,



and authority and dependence, and mutual service, and completion of possibilities of help and support—are all involved in it. This is that religious aspect of marriage, looking at which, we begin to realise the wide sweep of its importance.

For out of this, there come—in the way of God's appointment—other relations. The first characteristic of these is, that they are independent of choice; we find ourselves in them, we do not create them, and we cannot get rid of them. No one has *made* himself a brother, or a son; he *is* such, without his choosing; and from this there comes a Divine witness, from the very nature of things, of some of those necessary moral ties of human life, to snap which is to dislocate or destroy society. Authority has about it a Divine beauty, which comes from God Himself, and it is the special characteristic of fatherhood. It has been truly taught us by a great moral teacher, that for a human father to allow himself to exercise *dominion*, is to forget his noblest prerogative. The *author* of our being, in its earthly life, brings to us, or ought to bring to us, the sacredness of the idea of *authority*, and so lifts, or should lift us up to the thought of the ultimate Author of our being—our Father which is in heaven. It is not the exercise of compulsion and domination which will ever give real weight to a parent's teaching; it is the exercise of a loving authority. Dependence and obedience are ideas which grow out of the fact of sonship; a son only learns true independence and true power of command by the exercise of dependence upon, and obedience to, his father. These great things, no mere exercise of power, outside life itself, can either create or destroy; there is a manly nobility in the

submission of a son; there is a sweet and solemn grandeur in the wise command of a father: in *this* there is the majestic greatness of authority; in *that* there is the beautiful dignity of obedience. Both are supremely religious, and carry us back to the depth and reality of eternal things; they reveal the necessary laws of a true and healthy society. Faithfulness to these relations, and the gradual assimilation of the ideas which they represent, are the infallible marks of a great and advancing people. Low natures are ever inclined to licence, and disinclined to liberty. Centuries ago the Roman historian was struck by the characteristics of our own ancestors, who—still barbarians—overthrew the legions under Varus, to the utter astonishment of the Roman world. He had the penetration to perceive the moral causes which lay at the root of their success: the barbarians were manly, he says; they were truth-loving; above all, they had respect for woman and the virtues which create and surround a Christian home. The ‘law-abiding’ Englishman, who has a just detestation of lawlessness and mere licence, perhaps does not always realise how much of this noble spirit is due to the religious sense of English family life. The fifth commandment has its roots in Divine things and in the high necessities of social wellbeing; it passes out into social relations; it gives sanction to the true relative position of masters and servants, to the responsible duties of the master, to the equally responsible sacredness of service.

In the same way, the relation of brothers and sisters, which has its special seriousness and dignity from Holy Marriage, points to the important ideas taught by the religious view of family life. This relation again does



not depend upon choice ; it is inherent, it is necessary, it is lasting : and just as fatherhood and sonship make demands upon our moral energies, so does this. It is meant clearly—on its religious side—to teach us ‘sweet reasonableness,’ and consideration, and helpfulness, and sacrifice. These ideas extend into society ; they forbid mere selfish isolation ; they put their ban upon any mere corporate selfishness ; they keep manly and generous influences alive. Just as the father of a family is intended to be the guardian of the rest, and should learn by his necessary position to be sensible of responsibilities laid upon him to spend for them time and health and money and thought and affection ; just as the son may learn submission and loyalty, respect and considerate attentiveness ; just as the brother naturally absorbs the ideas of loving equality and kindly self-sacrifice—so, fatherhood, sonship, and brotherhood extend further and further in widening circles, first among those who through circumstances or affection are providentially placed in these relationships, even though not of the same family, and then in the case of others towards whom human feeling is rightly extended after it has been trained in the nursery of home.

It is thus that the family, religiously considered, is not only the truest type of the Church of Christ, but is the actual cause, as well as training-ground, of those virtues which make for a healthy society. The more we dwell upon the deep meaning of the religious aspect of family life, the more we see how grave are the questions which are involved in Holy Matrimony.

## CHAPTER III

### THE MORALITY OF THE OLD WORLD

THE moral condition, and therefore the wellbeing, of any people is most surely measured by its estimate of the place of woman and of the dignity of marriage. As society depends upon the family, and family life depends upon marriage, and marriage in its true sense depends upon the right relation of man and woman; so these questions are of supreme importance in forming a true estimate of the glory or degradation of any people. If nations become relaxed in their principles as to the true place of woman and the true dignity of marriage, those nations are so far forth on the road to decay. Other forces, such as great intellectual endowments, or long established and useful traditions and customs, may retard that decay; but let any people cease to have something of a true respect for the marriage bond, and for the right relation between man and woman, that nation—whether the process be quick or slow—is already on the road to ruin.

Nothing is more clearly taught us in history than this. We cannot violate moral principles, which lie at the very root of a healthy condition of things,

without injuring health and introducing the germs of disease. Diseases may work slowly or quickly, but unless they are checked and cured, in the long-run they lead to death; and as it is in the physical, so it is in the moral world. 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that' (and nothing else) 'shall he also reap,'<sup>1</sup> is an unalterable law in moral life. For this reason, every Christian must feel that a true grasp of God's will and commandment as to Holy Matrimony is of the first importance. And we see, plainly enough, from history that deviations from the Divine intention as to the relation of man and woman have been attended with the gravest consequences.

The Greeks were in many respects the most wonderful people of the world. They possessed intellectual gifts of the highest order. They have left behind them a literature which in many ways has never been surpassed or even approached; they were endowed with great physical courage, and they possessed wonderful physical beauty; their sense of the beautiful was of the keenest, and they had marvellous artistic power in the expression of that sense, especially in sculpture. They were a people who were eminently *alive*, and had the keenest appreciation of life, and that too, in many respects, of a most refined order. They had the capacity for entering into the deepest thoughts, and for interesting themselves in the most complicated philosophical problems. They knew the meaning of real affections; they had a high admiration for nobility of character; and small in numbers as they were, and divided up into many petty and quarrelling states, they have been in many ways ever since the intellectual trainers of the civilised world. To cast a glance on the condition of

<sup>1</sup> Gal. vi. 7.



such a people, with reference to the subject before us, must bring into strong relief the importance of Christian teaching as to marriage.

In the earlier period of Greek civilisation, down to the time of the Peloponnesian war, there are signs of a high ideal of marriage in the Greek mind. The wife appears to hold a dignified position. She is looked upon at first, not as a slave, but as the companion of the husband, and the regular rule was certainly that of monogamy. Gradually much of the better side of this state of things passed away; the wife held still a certain position of dignity as the mistress of her house; but she came to be looked upon less and less as the companion of the husband's life and joys and sorrows, and more as an instrument for the birth and bringing up of Greek citizens. From this it naturally followed that the bringing up of children suffered and the influence of the mother was diminished. Amidst the glories of the age of Pericles there had grown to be recognised in Athens a class of ladies in the position of Aspasia or Phryne, who were often gifted with great brilliancy and intellectual capacity, and were recognised as the real companions of the men over whom they held sway. This, of course, tended more and more to degrade and then destroy true thoughts of marriage and home. The consequence was, that gradually the most frightful vices were permitted and encouraged, and the low level to which morality was falling can be seen by the way in which such vices are spoken of by some of the best men of the time. At Sparta, by reason of the character of the people, society seems always to have been coarser than at Athens. There, whatever respect was shown to the wife was

simply shown to her as to one who was necessary for the birth of citizens, and this view produced coarse and degrading consequences. As the history of Greece goes on, and the people became more and more affected by Eastern manners, as indeed already under the Macedonian supremacy, there seems to have been a steady decline in the morality of marriage. In later Greece, there came the evils arising out of small families. The people were too idle or too luxurious to like the trouble and responsibility of the bringing up of children, and there came about a dislike of marriage and an avoidance of it. Men declined to accept the trouble of large families, and took means to avoid having them. The system of slavery brought with it the usual demoralisation; everywhere there was moral degradation. The historian Polybius deplores the state of things in his own days. 'It is the accordant opinion of all,' he says, 'that Greece now enjoys the greatest comfort of life, and yet there is want of men, desolation of cities; so that the land begins to lose its fruitfulness through want of cultivation. The reason is, out of softness, love of comfort and of ease, men, even if they live in the state of marriage, will bring up no children, or only one or two, in order to leave a good inheritance. Thus the evil becomes ever greater; since, if war or sickness takes away the one child, the family dies out.'<sup>1</sup> Side by side with all this there existed, of course, as always in such cases, the most degrading immorality, and as a consequence Greek civilisation, life, and influence passed to its decline and fall.

<sup>1</sup> Polybius, *Hist. Exc. Vatic.* ed. Geel, Lugd. Bat. 1829, pp. 105-7. Quoted in a shortened form, as above, by Döllinger, *Heidenthum und Judenthum*, pp. 692-3.



The history of marriage in ancient Rome is instructive in the same way. For some centuries marriage seems to have been held in the highest estimation; and it is said that for some five hundred years at any rate, from the time that we first know anything clearly of Roman history, divorce was never dreamt of. The wife in old Rome held a position of the highest dignity; there was a lofty sense of the sacredness of domestic life, and the marriage ceremony itself was of a serious and religious character. If the position of the father was one rather of domination than of authority, and if the tenderer side of human love was somewhat lost sight of, still the importance of family relationships was kept in view, and there was a respectful, if rugged, sense of the obligations of children to parents, and this tended in the right direction. In early Rome, as was natural, the great ideas of respect, of duty, of purity, held sway over the people through their respect for the marriage-bond. It was not probable, however, that such a state of things could be maintained, not to say developed to its highest condition, without the aids of a supernatural religion. So long as Rome was comparatively young and under more simple and primitive conditions, and was not exposed to temptations from the vices of other nations, all went fairly well; but the time came when Rome began to extend her dominions out into the world. As long as domestic life was pure, the State was strong. From about the time of the Punic wars a process of gradual deterioration set in. Soon after this, conquest followed upon conquest, and the vices and the vicious forms of religion belonging to other, especially Eastern, nations more and more corrupted the early Roman simplicity. The immense influx of

slaves which came with the conquests of the Empire led to licentious habits; women became corrupted as well as men; and as the Empire rose in power and wealth and luxury, the position of woman became more degraded. Virtue, that high virtue of which woman is especially the expression and the ideal, was almost lost: respect for woman naturally sank to the lowest point, and with it, of course, all right feelings with regard to marriage and to family life were lost. To meet the temptations which had come from Eastern conquest and the influx of slaves, there was no power strong enough. Civilisation is a blessing where it lifts men to higher thoughts and better things; corrupt civilisation is a curse; that curse fell with its full force upon the Roman Empire. The high virtues of woman, the old sanctities of home, were all undermined. The picture drawn by St. Paul in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is a good expression of the consequences of a state of things depicted before by the Roman poet—

‘Ætas parentum pejor avis tulit  
nos nequiores, mox daturos  
progeniem vitiosiore.’<sup>1</sup>

Nothing could be more deplorable than the state of society depicted by Juvenal and Tacitus; corruption was as complete as it is possible to imagine. The few good and high-minded men that were left looked out upon society, and only uttered a wail of despair. It was not only that all bonds were loosened, but that vice marched shamelessly forward with triumphant fearlessness: every kind of misery, suffering, and degradation

<sup>1</sup> ‘Our fathers, worse in their generation than our grandsires, begat us their viler progeny, soon to leave an offspring yet more vicious.’—Godley’s translation, Horace, *Odes*, iii. 6, 46-48.

went side by side with frightful luxury and cruelty. There was no power to withstand the steady disintegration of things; there was no real religion. But the important thing to note is this—that such civilisation as there was, was powerless to withstand the advance of social decay when once the right relation of man and woman had been forgotten; when respect, obedience, self-restraint, affection—the necessary ideas of family life—had been lost; and when Holy Marriage in any high and sacred sense had practically become a thing of the past.

It is a striking fact that Roman civilisation was in itself marvellously robust. Civilisation has been defined to be that which arranges ‘primarily directly for this life.’ It requires, as we understand it, that men should aim at ‘justice, honesty, humanity, honour, the love of truth, and that moderation in word and act which is so akin to truth.’ As we know it, it has learnt many lessons from Christianity, and it is more complete and more powerful now than it was once. It has great inherent forces, but it always falls short in itself of that special force which belongs to religion; it has been truly said, ‘Civilisation is the wisdom and the wit of this world; and its office is for this world. If it makes the best of this world, in the highest sense of the word, this is the utmost it can do. Beyond the present—and I include in this the futurity, as far as we can conceive it, of our condition here—it does not pretend to go.’<sup>1</sup> We are used to a civilisation which has been deeply moved and strongly touched by Christianity. The civilisation of Rome was a very grand thing; it showed the inherent power in strong and vigorous manhood to

<sup>1</sup> Church, *The Gifts of Civilisation*, p. 125.



rise high. There were plenty of things in it which were detestable and disastrous, but unfortunately that may be said of our own civilisation, which has had so many more advantages. It had about it, notwithstanding, much that was robust and vigorous; it had lofty and serious aims; it had many forces in it, tending to make for a noble life; nevertheless, it fell, became corrupt, and perished. The reason is, that the principles upon which society rests were assailed and betrayed. The old and great traditions and customs which assisted to preserve early simplicity and purity of character, the traditions and customs affecting the relation between man and woman, and the sanctities of home, and the consecration of these by religion (such as it was), were gradually undermined; and when these were undermined, it was only a question of time as to when the social fabric would collapse. For in the event of such undermining, 'it had no power and spring of recovery'; just as it had been with the Greeks, so it turned out even with a people so strong as the Romans, that when the morality of the old world failed in the primary and important relations of life, *i.e.* in marriage and all that is connected with marriage, everything else was on the road to ruin.

If the morality of the old world was unstable and then shaken to its foundations in the case of the greatest of Western peoples, much more was it in ruins in the East. Woman, among the Eastern nations, speaking broadly, has ever been the slave or plaything of man or the mere object of his passions. The people of Israel took, of course, a higher position; the Mosaic Law with them was a great reform. There had been, as we know from the sacred records, very serious

degeneracy in the ages before Abraham was called to be the father of God's elect people; whatever the meaning of Holy Scripture may be as to the sins of the 'sons of God' with the 'daughters of men,' there is no doubt that it points to some serious moral failure. The early Scripture records point to the throwing away of moral restraint, to the advance of ungoverned licentiousness, to the unbridled condition of fallen humanity, which sets moral rules at defiance, and is described as 'corruption' and 'violence.' We read of two catastrophes, the one world-wide, the other on a smaller scale—the Flood and the Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; and the cause assigned for both these judgments is the state of moral corruption into which mankind had fallen. The same was the cause of the destruction of the Canaanites. At times, it seems to us as if the treatment to which they were subjected was terribly severe. After all—in the counsels of Him who knows all things—it may have been merciful. It is certain, at any rate, from the sacred record, that punishment came upon them on account of their moral degradation. We find a record of fleshly corruption all through the history of the Patriarchs; even among the best of them, there was evidently only a very partial sense of the true relation of man and woman. Allowance had to be made for their very imperfect knowledge, and for their condition as that of men living in a mere twilight of revelation. Isaac and Rebekah seem to be solitary instances of something like a high and true view of married fidelity, and in this character they are referred to in our own Marriage Service. Even in so noble a character as that of Abraham, and (whatever his faults) so serious a



character as Jacob, the 'times of ignorance' had to be 'winked at.'

The Mosaic legislation was a partial revelation and a reform. Even here, however, polygamy had to be treated as a practice which had gained a foothold, and had to be regulated and restrained, but could not be entirely abolished. Divorce was undoubtedly permitted; but only because of 'hardness of heart,' *i.e.* of the imperfectness of moral sense to which it was impossible to bring home the full meaning of the truth. Nor perhaps was it possible for the truth to be thoroughly carried out in life, under conditions where there was not yet sufficient supernatural strength to overcome and restrain the natural passions of fallen man. But though divorce was permitted, it was permitted only under the strictest limitations; it was permitted for 'something shameful,' or 'some uncleanness.' The two schools of Rabbinical interpreters were at variance as to their interpretation of the Mosaic Law. The laxer school of Hillel interpreted it as referring to very slight and trivial reasons; the stricter school of Shammai interpreted it as referring to unchaste behaviour. We know that when the matter was referred to our Lord, He astonished His hearers by teaching them that any permission of divorce only witnessed to a moral decline, and that 'from the beginning it was not so.' Throughout the whole history of Israel there are records of terrible lapses into fleshly sins: the partial revelation indeed, which was granted to the chosen people, and their greater nearness to God through their prophets and the sacred ministrations of their religion, in some degree held in check the forces of human sin. Nevertheless, when our Lord

came, He found abundant corruption; the morality of the old world of Israel was in certain respects but little above that of the nations outside the Covenant. It is a striking fact that it was in the northern nations—then mere barbarians—that there lived some true sense of the relation of man to woman, and consequently these barbarians—our ancestors—were strong. Of them it has been well said; ‘Only in the far horizon of the North there is a streak of light, fitful indeed as the sunbeam among those storm-regions. There a half-nomad race, fallen into a wild idolatry and in perpetual feud with each other, yet have this single distinction above their personal bravery and freedom, that they honour woman. They have but their yoke of oxen, their caparisoned horse, and their arms; but what they have, they give in marriage to the partner of their choice, as a token that she is to share with them every labour and danger of life, all its battle, but the glory and the suffering alike. They have, and they are almost alone among barbarians in having, but one wife, and they are faithful to her. No youth, no beauty, no wealth, will make up in their eyes for the loss of virtue in woman. Fashion is powerless there, to make vice merely ridiculous, says the admiring Roman.’<sup>1</sup>

Looking back upon the old world then, we see that its strength gradually declined, because its sense of the dignity of marriage was lost. The right of divorce—shamefully abused both by Greeks and Romans and by Hebrews—a right, for the most part, exercised only by the man, and only in later Roman times by the woman, destroyed, as it always must destroy, true respect for woman and for the marriage-bond. Any sense of the

<sup>1</sup> Allies, *Formation of Christendom*, pp. 286, 287.

sacredness of marriage was gradually lost, as the sin of adultery on the part of the man was not considered of any account whatsoever. Relations practically polygamous degraded marriage. And thus the three great safeguards of marriage—its indissolubility, its sacredness, and its unity—gradually passed out of the moral horizon of mankind. Among the young and vigorous northern tribes, as we have seen, there remained in many respects a healthier state of things; and this gave them their strength, and made of them splendid material for a future, civilised Christendom. Speaking broadly, however, there had been a steady, moral deterioration with only occasional checks, in the old world. Woman had sunk into a state of degradation; a high sense of the meaning of home and family life was lost; hideous and shameless crimes abounded; the sense of obligation, and especially of the highest obligation, of rightly giving birth to, and bringing up, the generation which was to follow as possessor of the earth,—these were gone. As there was a general decay, so there was a general misery and despair: nothing could undo so disastrous a result but a radical reform in men's thoughts and principles as to marriage. Could such a reform come? and how?



## CHAPTER IV

### THE MORAL REFORM OF CHRISTIANITY

THERE had been, as we have seen, a high tone of morality in many instances in the old world. The level, however, was uneven; and when from altered circumstances in national life, such as arose from the wide conquests of Rome, there issued strong temptations, morality grievously degenerated. There was, in fact, no power of recovery; there was no religious basis to fall back upon. Whenever there was a failure in moral life, it was sure to show itself; and it showed itself, in fact, in some wrong view of the relation of man and woman. When Christianity came into the world, it based its great moral reformation upon religion. There had been in the old world, of course, some vague notions of the connection of religion and morality; Plato's doctrine of Ideas had about it a certain religious character, and he more or less conceived of life on earth as being in some way framed on a heavenly pattern. Other great philosophers denied this; with Aristotle it would appear that human conduct was only interesting and important as determined, not by any thought of another world, or by any relation of man to a higher being than himself, but rather by what seemed reason-

able about his own nature. The morality of life had to do entirely with the relation of man to his fellow-creatures, in so far as that relation seemed to be exhibited by right reason. In the old world, religion and morality parted company, and 'the outcome of the ancient world was an immoral religion and an irreligious morality.' We may take it as a truth that 'history shows that such religion is doomed, that such morality is impotent. This result of history proves that the two, religion and morality, are assigned to each other, that their truth is only found in their union. That alone is true religion which produces a vigorous morality, and that alone is a vigorous morality which arises from true religion.'<sup>1</sup>

It was quite certain, therefore, that in the old world, the moral deterioration which we have noticed in the last chapter was bound to come. And it was equally certain that it was bound to touch that deepest of all questions—the question we are considering. It was not that there were no instances of noble, married life in ancient Rome; such instances there were. Some magnificent instances of wifely devotion and fidelity are certainly to be found in the most corrupt age of the Empire. They are, however, like solitary beacons, showing the depth of the darkness around; for the general moral tone as to purity, and chastity, and the relation of the sexes was at the lowest, and excesses, perhaps unparalleled in the history of human iniquity, abounded in the face of day.

Things had reached a pass so terrible, that it seemed that if human society was to last at all, a change must come. A change did come; Christianity came, with

<sup>1</sup> Luthardt, *Moral Truths of Christianity*, Lecture i. pp. 18, 19.



its strong and clear moral system, perfectly practical, going into details for the regulation of the several relations of life, and with a strength to withstand, in the long-run, the assaults of evil, because it based its moral system upon religion. We may dwell presently upon the great foundation facts which gave such power to the Christian reform of social morality; for the present, it is well to consider some of the principles and tendencies of thought, and consequent authoritative enactments, which followed from the Christian revelation, and influenced immensely the whole question of the relation of the sexes, of the position of woman, and of the dignity of marriage.

For various reasons, which we do not dwell upon at the moment, one principle became very prominent. Undoubtedly, in the early days of Christianity, a more lofty view was held of the beauty of purity than, it is probable, had ever been held before. It gradually pervaded the Church and altered the whole atmosphere of human life. It is almost impossible for us to realise the contrast between 'the world,' with its unbridled licentiousness and the comparatively small body that bore the Christian name. As Christianity spread; as the leaven worked, 'leavening the whole lump,' this great idea came more and more into power. It is one of the truest marks of the supernatural strength of Christianity that this idea has never been permanently dethroned. There has been plenty of moral wickedness in Christendom: there are terrible problems in our own time unsolved; but vice still pays a homage to virtue; and there is a strong sense in the minds of the nations of Christendom, even amongst those whose lives by no means correspond with their convictions,

that purity is a healthy and a noble virtue, and that consequently it is impossible to be quite rid of the idea of the dignity of woman. In the early days of the Church, when Christianity came into power, the revolution in this respect was conspicuous. The laws of the early Christian emperors against any infringement of the moral law, and for the encouragement of a high tone in the relation of man and woman, were severe and even savage. Some of the legislation probably attempted too much, as the Puritans did in later times, and overshot the mark, and did harm. But some was of the most beneficent character, and suppressed or held in check incentives to vice, and set at liberty some who were enslaved against their will to evil customs. If the State did much in this direction, so certainly did the Church. The penitential discipline of the Church was a very real thing. Suspension from communion, or exclusion from communion for long periods, or even until the close of life, was felt to be a very serious punishment, in days when faith was strong; and it was a punishment that was inflicted in the case of serious moral delinquencies. There was very great need that the last remnants of heathen immorality should be rooted out with a strong hand; and in view of the necessity of a high view of marriage for the wellbeing of society at large, and the laxity that had prevailed, nothing but a strong reassertion of the moral law, backed by a Divine religion, could be sufficient for the purpose.

Among other forces brought to bear in the early Church was the instinct of asceticism. It is true that this feeling became in some respects fanatical, and as time went on led to some evil results. Still, it repre-

sented a great truth; it was a natural result of a necessary reaction; and it raised human thought on moral questions to a higher level. It represented a great truth, because the higher nature of man is infinitely more valuable than the lower; because things of sense must be subordinated to spiritual things; because the whole of man's nature has to be sanctified by a high sense of his spiritual dignity; because it profits a man less than nothing 'if he gain the whole world and lose himself, or be cast away.' It was also a natural reaction. For, once the light of Divine truth fell upon it, the human mind began to realise with awful force the depth of the degradation into which human nature had fallen; and even by natural laws, much more by Divine grace, the reaction was of corresponding intensity. It did a great deal of good—whatever evils came afterwards from its exaggeration—for it made plain before the eyes of men of what great efforts human nature, induced by a high motive and strengthened by Divine influence, is capable, even against the fiercest natural powers known to man.

Akin to this, the same lofty influence was exerted by the splendid heroism of the Virgin Martyrs; such examples as those of S. Blandina and S. Agnes sank into the hearts of men and women and aroused their imaginations to realise the beauty and strength of purity. The *Acta Sanctorum* are full of noble legends, for the most part authentic, and always representing real truths, which produced the same effect. Out of all this, there came a noble influence from Christianity, leading men and women to admire and emulate splendid examples, and to realise and love the virtue of chastity. And this was a motive which stimulated the charity of



the Church towards those who had fallen. The philanthropic efforts of modern days to save those who have fallen from the paths of virtue, only follow the example of the early Christians and of the Church in the Middle Ages. In the calendar of one or other part of the Church there are enumerated amongst the saints many who had once been slaves of sensual vice; such as S. Mary Magdalene, S. Mary of Egypt, S. Afra (about whom, however, there is some doubt), S. Pelagia, S. Thais, and S. Theodota, and in later times, S. Margarita of Cortona and others. There was a genuine enthusiasm for reclaiming those who had fallen, which shows the high value attached to purity. Naturally along with this, there was a restoration of the dignity of marriage. The fact that it had been represented by the great Apostle as the sacramental witness in the world, and the outward expression of the indissoluble union of Christ with His Church, had sunk deep into the minds of men. There are noble words as to the sacredness of marriage in early writers which testify to this; and even later, in the Middle Ages, there are fine sayings of the same sort, to the effect that woman was not taken from the head of man, for she was not intended to be his ruler; nor from his feet, for she was not intended to be his slave; but from his side, for she was to be his companion and his comfort. It must be acknowledged, however, that, by reaction no doubt from the dissoluteness of the past, there came to be an exaggerated value set upon celibacy and virginity, and that lower views of marriage were encouraged, which were injurious in the long-run to human morality. The relation designed for continuing the generations of the human family came to be in



many instances looked upon as a result of sin, and marriage came to be regarded almost exclusively on its lowest side. It is not unnatural that it should have been so; the virginal life presented to the mind of the Church a fascinating picture. It was a life of free self-dedication of those who put aside some of the greatest permitted joys of human life in order to devote themselves wholly to Christ. If marriage was consecrated as being the very image of the Incarnation, so the virginal life seemed to be the very image of that by which the Incarnation itself was wrought. It was a constant and an entire sacrifice; it enabled men to achieve some of those lofty acts of self-denial which are spoken of in the Gospels; it gave a certain independence of things of the world, and freed the life from cares and duties which are necessarily involved in marriage. It was natural enough that this should be the case, as a reaction against a time of ambition and luxury and worldliness and unbridled licentiousness; it had its good and its great side, but like all good things, it was liable to exaggeration, and then to degeneracy. There is no doubt that, paradoxical as it may appear, the fascination of asceticism and the extreme self-renunciation of the virginal life at once elevated the idea of marriage and depressed it. It elevated it, because it brought prominently before the eyes of men the beauty of self-denial and chastity. It at last depressed it, because it inclined men to look at Holy Marriage as a less perfect state, and to take a low view of it, as if it did not involve, as it does, right ideas of purity. There is no special dignity or greatness in an unmarried life, except so far as it is undertaken for the glory of God and for the special benefit

of our fellow-creatures. Married life, when rightly entered into, may be one of very high self-denial and of great virtue. The exaggeration of the really true idea of the dignity of virginal life resulted in evils which became serious; the mode of speaking of the three vows of 'poverty, chastity, and obedience' is a witness to this. It rather shows the somewhat Manichæan tendency which has always haunted, more or less, some minds in the Church to look upon marriage as a 'concession' to man's weakness, instead of, as it is, a very holy vocation. It would be right to speak of the three vows as 'poverty, celibacy, and obedience,' for chastity is required of all Christians, married or unmarried. The fact is that as time went on, from various causes, the earlier and nobler thoughts of the Church on the subject deteriorated. Celibacy, especially in the clergy, is in many very noble and necessary self-denial for the advancement of God's work, and in our own days more necessary perhaps than ever; but it is not more noble than any other supreme act of self-renunciation made for high purposes—just as a noble and pure-minded soldier may deny himself the joys (and also, be it remembered, spare himself the anxieties) of domestic life for the sake of his country. In the period when the Church was emerging from persecution, or when it was undergoing persecution, there seems to have been a much stronger feeling of the needs of the individual soul than of the needs of society. It was not that these latter were lost sight of; but as Christianity, in fact, may be said to have restored the idea of personal life and of the value of the single soul, as distinct from the idea of the value of the State and its citizens, so it was

natural, and indeed necessary, that greater stress should be laid upon that side of things. Social morality was indeed taught and strongly enforced by the Gospel; but in the state in which the world found itself when the Church had greatest opportunities for doing its work, personal morality was the first need that had to be insisted upon. It has been said, not untruly, by a distinguished historian: 'It is remarkable how rarely, if ever (I cannot call to mind an instance), in the discussions of the comparative merits of marriage and celibacy, the social advantages appear to have occurred to the mind. . . . It is always argued with relation to the interests and the perfection of the individual soul, and even with regard to that the writers seem almost unconscious of the softening and humanising effect of the natural affections, the beauty of parental tenderness and filial love.'<sup>1</sup> In the early Middle Ages, and since that period, in the Roman Church, the celibacy of the clergy has been made compulsory. At first the ministration of married clergy had been allowed;<sup>2</sup> then it was discountenanced; then at last forbidden. No doubt this was partly due to the mistaken view of the dignity of celibacy which has been alluded to. The thing grew, however, also out of a very just and high conception of the nobility of a *dedicated* state; it was forgotten that to some men the dedicated state was only possible and could only be perfect in Holy Marriage. Men who had distinctly the *vocation* for marriage were able to dedicate them-

<sup>1</sup> Milman, *History of Christianity*, iii. 196.

<sup>2</sup> There are competent authorities who hold that, according to the primitive rule, the married might be ordained, but priests might not marry.



selves to their sacred callings more completely and single-heartedly as married men, if they married rightly, than as celibates. But again, another reason was purely practical: there were many works in the Ministry, as there *are* many—especially of a missionary character—for which men who are freed from the ties that belong to the Christian home, were and are much better fitted. And we cannot doubt that the enforcement of celibacy, especially from the time of Hildebrand onwards, was due in a great measure to the policy of a severe and strict discipline in the Roman Church, and aimed at binding the clergy closely to the Papacy. This, of course, could be much better done when the clergy to a great degree ceased to have the feelings of ordinary citizens with wives and children of their own, and were formed into a kind of caste, or class apart. The dreadful consequences of *enforced* celibacy, and the evils that have resulted from it to the Church, have shown clearly enough that although the tendency to encourage celibacy as a holy vocation and a dedication of the whole man for Divine work was right and good, the enforcing of it, especially when it seemed to cast a slur upon Holy Marriage, was thoroughly bad.

Apart from these measures relating to the clergy, which arose in great part from reasons of policy and of a practical character, the Christian Church from the first and at all times, even in its darkest moments, has taught the dignity of marriage and the true position of woman, and has been a great reforming power in all moral questions. The strong feeling in the early Church as to second marriages is a witness to the same thing; that feeling had existed to a certain



extent in pre-Christian times. Some moralists have supposed that this resulted from a low view of marriage. I believe it to have been quite the reverse. The same feeling prevailed to a certain extent in the ancient world. Virgil expresses the sentiment by the lips of Dido;<sup>1</sup> and some Roman wives, we know, were 'widows indeed' after the death of their husbands, and lived retired lives and cherished the memory of those who were gone. The family of Camillus is noted for the absence of second marriages, and the poet Statius declares that 'to love a wife when living is a pleasure; to love her when dead is an act of religion.' The feeling was stronger with regard to women than to men. This beautiful sentiment arising from a high estimate of married love was deepened and enlarged in the Church. Very strong things, and sometimes perhaps extravagant things, were said on the subject; but there was a distinct and vigorous feeling in the early days of the Church against second marriages, and as for persons marrying more than twice, this was looked upon as shocking in the extreme. Any layman who married twice was excluded from the priesthood, and was not admitted to Communion until after a period of penance. And although in extreme cases of necessity laymen were permitted to administer the

<sup>1</sup> 'Huic uni forsā potui succumbere culpæ.

Sed mihi vel tellus optem prius ima dehiscat,

Vel . . . . .

Ante, Pudor, quam te violō, aut tua jura resolvo.'

'To this one sin perchance I might have come. . . . But, for me, let earth first yawn to lowest hell . . . ere ever I wrong thee, Chastity, or relax thy laws' (*Æneid*, iv. 19 sqq.).

sacrament of Baptism, they were not so permitted if they had been married a second time.

It may be that these views and practices were extreme, and somewhat rigid, but at least they show the high ideal of married love which was fostered by the Christian Church. With whatever faults, or with whatever extravagances, the Church at any rate raised before the minds and imaginations of men the virtue of chastity, and the nobility and sacredness of marriage, and the dignity of womanhood. According to this teaching, so new to the world, 'the Christian's body is a temple of God, sanctified for His service, and inhabited by the Holy Ghost; chastity is the pure priestly feeling which preserves the body from becoming a mere instrument of sensual desire, and hallows it, to be an organ of the Divine Will in the generation of children, making it part of the one offering to be continually presented to God, as being united to the human nature of the Redeemer, and destined to be raised and glorified hereafter. For therein is shown the power and reality of a religion which masters the most vehement and unbridled of our passions, subject as it is to such terrible perversion, and easily degenerating from a fount of life into a deadly poison that pollutes the very sources of our being. Here Christianity gains its hardest and most beneficial victory. Dishonour of woman, contempt of marriage, celibacy and childlessness from corruption, selfishness and mutual criminality, facility of divorce and re-marriage . . . all these moral abominations, springing from the same root, prevailed far and wide, and desolated whole provinces. The Church opposed to them her notion of chastity, her consecration of marriage, her

absolute prohibition of divorce, and her praise of continence and virginity. She taught and showed that the wife is not the mere chattel of the man' . . . nor merely 'for perpetuating his family, but his equal, joined to him in a sacred and indissoluble bond. . . . Chastity was considered the virtue which above all gives moral strength and self-mastery to the soul, and preserves it from being made effeminate and pressed down under the weight of the body. Nor does Christian teaching recognise in marriage love any involuntary feeling, depriving man of his liberty of will and action; such a sentiment the Apostles would have called by a very different name. The marriage love which they hold to be a duty in Christians is a free and conscious direction of will, grounded on high religious motives—a feeling under their own control, not an unbridled passion—a feeling which can be made as pure and enduring as love of friends, or children, or country.'<sup>1</sup> All this was very different from the views that had commonly prevailed before. On the whole marriage question, on the whole relation of man to woman, and woman to man, the Christian Church was a great reforming society, and the result of its efforts was a great reform; and whatever fallings away there have been since, within the bounds of Christendom—and there is no doubt they have been abundant—these strong reforming moral principles have ever carried with them, what was unknown to the old world—a power of recovery.

<sup>1</sup> Döllinger, *The First Age of the Church*, pp. 251, 252.



## CHAPTER V

### THE BASIS OF THE MORAL REFORM OF CHRISTIANITY

THAT there has been a great moral reform with regard to the relation of man and woman, and therefore of the whole question of marriage, there can be no doubt. It is equally certain that, whatever mistakes have been made, that reform has come through the Christian Church. It would be idle to deny the terrible moral lapses of which many in Christendom have been guilty from time to time; but to say this is only to acknowledge that Christianity and the Christian Church have had to cope with that strange and stubborn thing—fallen human nature. The wonderful thing is, not that there have been lapses, but that, in spite of them, there have been such astonishing recoveries. It is of importance to consider the basis on which that reform rested, and that for many reasons. From such a consideration we see why it took hold of mankind, but, above all, upon what alone it can hope to stand.

That reform rested upon religion.

There is a considerable tendency in our own day to push forward secular culture, whilst ignoring the need of religious teaching. The great rush of life, the need for the young to lose no time and push forward vigor-



ously if they are to succeed, make the present life and its claims so vivid and so pressing, that there is a danger of forgetting the life beyond. The Church may have erred at one time in so putting forward the need of preparation for another world as to place somewhat in the shade the need of preparation for this. If so, it is not the error of the present time. What are called philanthropic enterprises and social schemes almost exclusively employ the thoughts and take up the time of many Christians. It is good that these should be attended to ; but there is considerable danger lest they should be *so* attended to as almost to exclude, or at any rate to throw into the background, thoughts of the necessary truths of religion, and of direct and spiritual duty to God. There is an effort therefore, sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious, to produce and act upon a social morality resting entirely on itself. This may do for a time, but in the long-run it will not stand. 'A moral philosophy which ignores Christianity, ignores also actual morality, and thus renders itself unpractical. If ethical science is, on the contrary, pervaded by the principles of Christianity, it cannot forbear entering into the religious element of morality.' The truth is that 'religion shows how the great moral contrasts of the world are reconciled by God, and morality shows how man is to reconcile them in his life in the world. But this can be done only on the ground of the fact alluded to. For only the certainty that reconciliation already exists on the part of God can impart a cheerful willingness in labouring at the moral work of reconciliation ; while it, at the same time, involves a demand that this principle of religion should be carried out in the world of morality.'

It is surely clear that when we say a thing *ought* to be, whether in personal or social matters, we mean, and we must mean, that we *owe* something to another; that is, as any serious, religious person must believe, we *owe* it to God. Moral obligation therefore can only fully exist where there is some sense of the relation of the soul to God, *i.e.* of religion. Moral obligation, as it was understood without Christianity, took little notice of anything beyond the cardinal virtues—wisdom, justice, valour, and prudence; but this referred merely to the relations of man to man in civil life, and they were powerless to touch many of those relations, and especially the most serious of all—the relation of man to woman. The Stoic philosophy had indeed its strong point. It had a notion of universal brotherhood and of the close tie between human beings—which, as we have seen, can only be truly felt and properly carried out when the family is taken as the unit of society, *i.e.* when the solemnity of marriage is in some sense realised. With the Stoics it was a notion and nothing more; they did not go deep enough, for there was nothing to which to go. The something which alone could be found as a solid foundation for individual and social morality was and is a true sense of the personal God. In other words, morality—and especially a morality which, like that of marriage, claims to guide, rule, and tame the most vehement and wayward of human passions—must be based upon religion.

The Christian religion brought to light, and drove strongly into the hearts of mankind, just those truths which are needed for so great an enterprise. For according to Christian revelation there is an inter-com-

munion of real and essential love within the substantial Life of the Godhead. This truth, upon which so much depends in shaping our thoughts, is impoverished by all Unitarian forms of thought. In the great mystery of the Holy Trinity, it is necessary for the Catholic Christian to believe that essentially and from all eternity there is this inter-communion of perfect love within the Divine Life. The very idea of an interchange of love and sympathy enters therefore into our fundamental thoughts as to the Life of God. And from this it is clear that perfect love, as a Divine ideal, must be the centre of human intercourse and the foundation of the relations of human life if we are, as we are, made in the image of God.

But more than that, the Christian revelation gives us more particular ideas as to the character of that love.

What may be called natural Theism leads us a long way towards the belief in One God; that is, of 'a God who is numerically One; who is Personal, the Author, Sustainer, and Finisher of all things; the Life of law and order, the Moral Governor; One who is Supreme and Sole; like Himself, unlike all things besides Himself, which all are but His creatures; distinct from, independent of them all; One who is Self-existing, absolutely Infinite, who has ever been and will be, to whom nothing is past or future; who is all perfection, and the fulness and Archetype of every possible excellence, the Truth itself, Wisdom, Love, Justice, Holiness; One who is All-powerful, All-knowing, Omnipresent, Incomprehensible. These are some of the distinctive prerogatives'<sup>1</sup> of the great God. And we learn to know Him, it is acutely said, very much

<sup>1</sup> Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, p. 98.



as we learn to know one another. 'When it is said that we cannot see God, this is undeniable; but in what sense have we a discernment of His creatures, of the individual beings which surround us? The evidence which we have of their presence lies in the phenomena which address our senses, and our warrant for taking this for evidence is our instinctive certitude that they are evidence. . . . Therefore when we speak of our having a picture of the things which are perceived through the senses, we mean a certain representation, true as far as it goes, but not adequate. And so of those intellectual objects which are brought home to us through our senses:—that they exist, we know by instinct; that they are such and such, we apprehend from the impressions that they leave upon our minds. Thus the life and writings of "any great men" leave upon us certain impressions of the intellectual and moral character of each of them.' We cannot mistake or confuse one with the other; 'in each case we see the man in his language.'<sup>1</sup> We know perfectly well, we know by instinct, which is its own evidence, that the person we think of is not a mere impression on our senses; of what sort he is, we know by the nature of the impression upon us.

Now it is truly enough argued that our knowledge of God is very much of this kind. If certain sensible phenomena are evidence of the presence of others, certain mental phenomena fulfil the same office as regards God. Those mental phenomena we call the sense of moral obligation. We find that there is a sanction, higher than anything which comes merely from ourselves, in the voice of conscience. So conscience

<sup>1</sup> Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, pp. 99, 100.



and the moral sense really enable us to know God up to a certain point—something of His character, in approving good and disapproving evil; something of His authority in making us feel our responsibility to One above us. So much, natural Theism would teach us.

But the Christian revelation goes further. In the substantial life of the One God, that religion puts before us three Persons. The word person, ‘though it cannot mean precisely the same when used of God as when it is used of man, yet may be sufficiently explained by that common use, to allow of its being intelligibly applied to the Divine Nature’;<sup>1</sup> it brings to us a reality which suggests, however deep the mystery may be, ‘motives for devotion and faithful obedience’; it puts before us a basis of moral relations. For it speaks to us distinctly of a Father, with all a father’s characteristics, at once with love and authority, because the source and origin of life. It puts before us a Son with all perfect filial characteristics. It is remarkable that the Divine Wisdom, by which title the Second Person in the Holy Trinity is so constantly referred to in the earlier Scriptures, is identified in the later with the Word and the Son. In human life nothing can be imagined closer, in some respects, to a man than the son who receives his life from him, and the word which is the embodiment of his thought. Both these titles are used to show the distinctness of the Second Person from the First, yet their oneness, and relation in the mystery of the Trinity. It reveals to us also ‘the loving Spirit,’ the ‘Lord and the Lifegiver,’ who has been called by theologians the term of the

<sup>1</sup> Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, p. 123.

Godhead—the personal love of the Father to the Son, and of the Son to the Father, and the Agent for the fulfilment of the designs of that Love in the life called into being by God.

The Incarnation of the Eternal Word brought these relations closer to and more vividly before the minds of men. Our Lord taught us to think of our Father which is in heaven, and to understand the dignity and responsibility of fatherhood on earth, just because the earthly father is, so to speak, the shadow of the heavenly, and because all life and all authority which come from a father have their real origin in the one Father. ‘Call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your Father which is in heaven,’ reminds us not that we are to disregard the sacred office or the sacred name in the earthly relation, but that we are to remember why they are so sacred. In the Incarnation also we learn more deeply the meaning of filial obedience and tenderness, the uniting power of love and sympathy, the sacredness of the office belonging to a son. And this is expanded into its full meaning, or rather the deep meaning of it is made clear to us in a practical way, by the fact that our Lord was born of an earthly mother, and that

‘He calls her mother, evermore.’

This leads further to a full revelation of the basis of the Christian moral reform.

It is always to be remembered that the merely human tie between earth and heaven is not man but woman. This fact—the fact that Mary was Mother of God—at once raised the whole status of woman. It raised it, that is, *in posse*. Certain principles and

certain facts came out in Christianity. They did not, as we know, possess mankind as a whole immediately. The teaching of the Truth was like the leaven that leaveneth the whole lump; it at first affected a narrow circle; gradually it has affected the world. Woman cannot rise in the scale without man rising also; and woman gradually rose in dignity by reason of the Providential place assigned to Mary. In the same way the dignity of man was exalted beyond measure by the fact of the manhood of Jesus Christ. Those who do not hold the Catholic Faith as to the Incarnation, lose sight of the real reason of that great reform in human morals which came with Christianity. The moment men began to realise that the Eternal Word had become Perfect Man, that moment they began to learn in a new way the dignity of manhood. The moment they began to realise that He was born of a human mother, and born without the intervention of any human father, that moment they began to feel in a deeper, truer sort the dignity of woman. By the Christian revelation man recovered his sense of God, his sense of his own importance as God's creature, his sense of the importance of human nature, including woman as well as man. A higher moral motive, a higher and fixed moral standard, and a fresh moral power came into human life with the revelation of God made Man, and all that it involves.

Then, again, in Christ's action and teaching there was a new impetus given to social morality. The Church was gathered together out of the family of mankind and united with Christ by a special bond undreamt of before. This raised the whole position of marriage. It is Christ's love to His Church,



and the Church's clinging to Christ, which gives the whole point and basis to the relation of husband and wife. 'Thus, these duties forming the groundwork of natural society have a supernatural motive given to them,' and all the Apostolic injunctions with regard to the married relation arise out of this. The earnest exhortations of the Apostle as to these duties must indeed have produced a sense of startled astonishment on those who knew the effete society of the time. It was a great moral reform. And then, again, our Lord's actions and His direct teachings bore directly upon the same points. The Church has always felt, for instance, that His presence at the marriage of Cana in Galilee had a special bearing on the Divine teaching of the sanctity of the marriage state. The wonderful miracle performed on that occasion showed indeed the depth and tenderness of His sympathy even with mankind's lesser anxieties; but it went further, it exalted the greatness of the occasion as arising from the sacredness of the marriage bond. Such an event, again, as the raising of the widow's son at Nain has in it a direct teaching of the sacredness of the parental and filial tie; while such a story as that of the prodigal son, besides its bearing on the deepest and tenderest relations of the soul with God, illustrates as well as exalts the same truth.

We know also that our Lord took great pains to correct the abuses of the law of Moses in this matter, and to state the Christian law with emphasis and clearness, as well as to re-state the original law of God. Of this we may speak later, under another head of the question before us; but it, as well as all the other considerations upon which we have dwelt, reminds



us that the great moral reform which Christianity introduced has its basis in deep and solid truths of man's nature and God's nature, and the relation of man to God; it rests upon no sandy foundation of mere theory. Its immense influence and the benefit of it to mankind are not only in themselves proofs of the truth and the value of the Christian revelation, but they also remind us of the moral dangers that must follow on any tampering with the foundations of the Christian Religion. It required no slight force to attack successfully and overthrow the moral habits which were in possession, and which had on their side, as they have still, the strong and unruly passions of fallen man. A moralist of distinction, by no means disposed to be unduly favourable to the influence of the Church, after noticing the terribly lax notions prevailing in the Empire, speaks as follows:<sup>1</sup>—

‘Against these notions Christianity declared a direct and implacable warfare, which was imperfectly reflected in the civil legislation, but appeared unequivocally in the writings of the Fathers and in most of the decrees of the Councils. It taught as a religious dogma, invariable, inflexible, and independent of all utilitarian calculations, that all forms of intercourse of the sexes, other than life-long unions, were criminal. By teaching men to regard this doctrine as axiomatic, and therefore inflicting severe social penalties and deep degradation on transient connections, it has profoundly modified even their utilitarian aspect, and has rendered them in most countries furtive and disguised. There is probably no other branch of ethics which has been so largely determined by special dogmatic theology,

<sup>1</sup> Lecky, *History of European Morals*, ii. 371, 372.

and there is none which would be so deeply affected by its decay.'

This is a great testimony to the two facts which have been before us, viz. that in all matters relating to marriage and family life, Christianity meant a great reform; and the wide-reaching effects of that reform, in the face of the most serious dangers and difficulties, can only be accounted for by its finding its basis in the very nature of God and man and of their relation one to another, *i.e.* in supernatural religion.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE VARIOUS ASPECTS OF MARRIAGE

MARRIAGE is one of those deep and fundamental facts which cannot be ignored at any time in human history. We have seen that it is of the highest importance to realise the sacredness and separateness of each human life. It is also true that this serious thought was much obscured before the coming of Christ, and that Christianity, amongst other benefits which it bestowed upon mankind, brought it vividly into view. But we have also seen that human society never was, and never could be, a mere collection of separate individuals. Each individual starts in life in some necessary relation to others, and each one by his mere existence presupposes a relation of man to woman. That relation, therefore, lies at the very root of human society; and that relation, when rightly adjusted, is marriage.

There are various aspects of marriage which have been presented to human minds according as men took an imperfect or a more complete view of the subject.

(1) Marriage has been viewed merely as a *contract*. A contract it certainly is, but the claim of Christianity is that it is that, and much more. The Romans, for instance, looked upon marriage, certainly in later times, as a mere contract. They recognised that the consent

of two persons was needed, and their various ceremonies pointed to a solemn contract arising out of that consent. But a contract, if it is nothing more, would of course terminate without any difficulty by mutual consent, as from this it sprang. In any contract there are certain terms and conditions; these are arranged by the contracting parties. Such relation as arises out of these, as they have created it, so they can destroy it.

There is considerable evidence that this aspect of marriage is a very insufficient one, not merely according to the teaching of Christianity, but before Christianity, according to the witness of the old world; and Christians have strong evidence on their side for that fallen state of man which they believe to be the reason for any contentment with such an insufficient aspect.

(2) For a truer aspect of marriage than that of a contract is an estate, or status, or, as we may better call it, a *relation*. If it is only a contract, as we have seen, and therefore only created by the contracting parties, then, of course, it is easy enough to put it aside. There are those who, arguing from sentiment, in itself not without much truth, have boldly declared in favour of what is called 'free love.' Marriage, they argue, is only real when there is a right affection, and so, if affection dies down, marriage ceases to be. These persons disregard altogether the solemn aspect which marriage has when considered in relation to society, and make it merely into a contract, though a contract arising out of, and depending upon, human affection. In this matter extremes often meet; and there are those who, valuing the social aspect of marriage, look upon it merely as a contract dependent upon law. The law has in view the existence and wellbeing of society. It



sanctions the inclinations of affection by the bonds of law : according to this view, as law creates marriage, so at any time it can bring it to an end. This was very much the view among the Romans, to which we have referred. There is a certain truth in both these views, and a certain amount of falsehood. It is true that there ought to be mutual affection leading to marriage. It is also true that in all properly organised societies of civilised beings law should come in to sanction marriage. But neither affection nor law creates marriage. Marriage is a relation. To enter into it, men and women ought to have right affections, and they ought to have the sanction and protection of law ; but they enter into it, because it is a relation of a serious and solemn kind, and not merely a contract, to be made or ended by either sentiment or law.

How deeply this has been felt in human nature, even before the Christian revelation, is witnessed to by some of the greatest masterpieces of Greek genius. No people, it has been truly said, would appear at first sight to be likely to be more opposed to any restraints upon human taste and human appetite than the Greeks ; because among them, individualism reigned triumphant both in art and literature, and both these were impregnated with the highest conceptions of sensuous beauty. This temper, as we have seen, greatly affected Greek society in the age of Pericles and later in a sense adverse to marriage. None the less, it has been truly observed that no people have witnessed more strongly to marriage being a necessary relation than they. The whole story of the *Iliad* had sunk deeply into the minds of the Greeks. It represented to them the enduring conflict between liberty and tyranny ;

between their own ideas of freedom and civilisation and the ideas which created and governed the monarchies of Asia. And this great poem, amidst its many teachings, teaches few things more impressively than their solemn sense of the sacredness of marriage. Their tribes in the past undertook the great enterprise of the Trojan war, and stood together in that undertaking in defence of the marriage vow. It shows us that, whatever evil deeds it may attribute to its heroes, marriage was looked upon as a most sacred relation. 'No poem in the world,' it has been truly said, 'does so much homage to the hearth and the home, and especially to wives, as this poem. Amidst the clatter of spear and shields, in the Greek ships or the Trojan city, they are never forgotten. The reader is impressed before he is aware of it with the conviction that the Greek manners must have been mainly created by the conjugal relation, and that the weakness and corruption of manners may be mainly traced to the violation of it.'<sup>1</sup>

The same thing is true of the *Odyssey*. Whatever were the vicissitudes, whatever the varying moods of the hero, he had always before him that to which he was looking during his long wanderings—the return to the home and the wife. And this is a real witness to the truth that the Greeks felt the seriousness and depth of that relation, and that upon this feeling their society was founded. With them, decay set in when this high feeling was shaken. Nothing can warn us more than this of the immense importance to the welfare of mankind of the recognition of marriage as a relation. And it is much to be noted that this sense lived on in the Greek mind with a marvellous intensity,

<sup>1</sup> Maurice, *Social Morality*, p. 54.

when many things were occurring not unlikely to shake it. The strong artistic temper of the Greeks led them naturally to lay much stress on individualism, on taste, on sentiment. It has been truly enough observed that the æsthetic faculties may work dangerously against moral considerations. Yet the Greek tragedies, in an age when taste and choice and individualism prevailed, were still founded on a strong sense of the sanctity of the marriage bond; it has been said truly of the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus: 'It is the tragedy of the broken relation, of the vengeance on the husband, of the vengeance on the adulterers, of the furies that tormented the matricide, which appealed to the Greek mind and conscience.'<sup>1</sup> When the Greeks began to look upon marriage as a mere matter of law, instead of a solemn relation, older and lying deeper than law, and itself sustaining law,—then the morality of the nation began to decline, just as we may observe in our own times, when the same sort of corrupting view of marriage has crept into men's minds.

There is no doubt that this sense of a relation into which men and women entered, which they did not create, haunted the mind and conscience of the ancient world. The Christian can, of course, account for the fact of the decay of this sense and for the consequent evils, because he believes that the Fall of man is a truth, not only witnessed to by revelation, but evident enough to all observers. Some philosophers have believed in the steady progress of the race, and have denied the doctrine, or rather we should say the fact, of the Fall. That there has been progress, no one will deny; and especially the Christian believes that there

<sup>1</sup> Maurice, *Social Morality*, p. 56.



has been wonderful progress since Christ came, owing to the new forces which He placed at the disposal of mankind. But progress has been so intermittent, and there have been such terrible lapses, and such corruptions, that it is impossible, in view of facts, to deny the fallen condition of the race.

(3) Looking at the matter according to the Christian revelation, a true aspect of marriage is that 'in the time of man's innocency' this relation was *divinely instituted*. We have our Lord's authority for saying that that relation implied the closest union; that 'they twain should be one flesh.' Before the Fall, this institution was given to those who were in 'original righteousness;' they were clothed, that is, with a robe of righteousness, and the forfeiture of that robe of righteousness is what is called 'original sin.' Before that forfeiture, they were in a condition to recognise and use rightly the relation of marriage, according to the Divine intention, although they were in some respects less favoured than the children of the Christian dispensation, as to them was not given the indwelling Spirit in the same way that He is given to those whose bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost.

In the long centuries between the Fall of man and the coming of Christ, we find no change made in the fundamental truth as to the Divine institution. Things, however, had greatly changed; degradation and corruption had come on the human race; there was alienation from God; but still, as we have seen, here and there the sense of that relation which was divinely instituted was in the minds of men. Amongst the chosen people, the legislation of Moses was intended to raise the standard. He found things in such a con-



dition that the relation of marriage was treated with the greatest laxity. Husbands put away their wives on the most trivial grounds and from mere caprice. In the Mosaic legislation this was checked; for any putting away, the husband was compelled to have a document legally attested before a high authority. Adultery was looked upon as so dreadful that to it was affixed the death-penalty; and no putting away was permitted except for 'some uncleanness,' or 'the shame of the thing,' which probably included 'grave cases of immodesty and indecent conduct, and also such . . . defilement . . . as by the Levitical law rendered a person "unclean."'" Mosaic legislation, therefore, raised the whole question to a higher level. Polygamy, indeed, was permitted under certain restrictions, but re-marriage after divorce was discountenanced in the strongest possible manner.<sup>1</sup> Whatever allowances were made for separation in regard to marriage at all, were made because of the 'hardness of their hearts,' to a people who had not yet received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which is given to Christians, and were only just emerging gradually from idolatry.

As time went on, there came a relaxing of the Mosaic law, and the sophistries of the Rabbis, especially of the laxer school, greatly shook the true view of marriage as a permanent and solemn relation. This, amongst other things, our Lord set Himself to correct; but of this we must speak again.

(4) The aspect of marriage under the light of Christianity is the truest and the most complete. It is recognised in the Christian Church as fundamentally a relation, as divinely instituted, as, of course, implying a

<sup>1</sup> See chap. viii. p. 81 *inf.* and note.

contract, but as something higher and more serious still. For Christian men and Christian women have become 'members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.' They are in many senses different; they are on a higher level; they have greater gifts; they have deeper responsibilities than those who are not in the Christian covenant. Their marriage is especially, according to the teaching of our Lord, a reverting to marriage as originally instituted, in which there must be indissolubility and the mutual faithfulness of two persons; but also it rises to a higher level. 'These being members of Christ, and temples of the Holy Spirit, when they are united in marriage, not merely remain each blest by the Spirit as before the marriage; but the grace of the indwelling Spirit, working through the Divine institution of marriage, makes the marriage union to be a deeper, more intense, more mysterious interpenetration of being than it had been even in Paradise.' Further, it is a mysterious expression and symbol in the outer world of the close and mystical union betwixt Christ and His Church.

Further, marriage has been looked upon in the Christian Church as a Sacrament. The word sacrament is used, of course, in a very wide, as in a narrower sense. In a wide sense this world is sacramental; God is ever working through outward means to convey unseen power. Being ourselves creatures of a composite nature, having bodies as well as souls, it is in accordance with analogy and right reason that we should be dealt with accordingly, by outward signs with inward grace. In a narrower sense, in the Divine economy with regard to the Church, seven Sacraments have been considered as special channels of Divine gifts through outward signs.

Of these, two are of transcendent importance, that is, Holy Baptism and the Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. These two are 'generally' (that is, universally) 'necessary to salvation,' where they may be had. The remaining five have each their own special importance; of these Holy Marriage is considered one. It has risen to this dignity through the Incarnation of the Eternal Word. Our Lord did not leave on record in the New Testament the actual form or manner of administration of this or the other four (and as we may call them) lesser Sacraments; but as He guided His Apostles into all truth, we know that the Church's mind on these subjects represents the mind of Christ. We may look upon Holy Matrimony, therefore, as a Sacrament instituted by our Lord to restore and raise to the highest power the original Divine institution, to give power to men and women who enter into this relation to sanctify it perfectly, to realise the depth and mystery of the bond that unites them in every part of their being, 'to bring up their children in a Christian manner, if God give them children, and to represent to the world the union of Christ and His Church. Here there is, of course, a visible sign and an inward grace, and an institution for a special purpose, coming from the mind of Christ.'

It may be permitted, perhaps, to quote here my own conclusions on certain details of this sacramental aspect of Marriage, written elsewhere:—

'Theologians represent Sacraments as possessing what is called *matter* and *form*.

'(1) The *matter* of the Sacrament of Holy Marriage has been believed to be found in the mutual consent or contract by which those who are being married give to



one another power, each over the other; and it has been justly noticed that this itself points to the dignity of this Sacrament; for whilst in Baptism the matter is the ordinary creature of water, here it is found in the living temples of the Holy Ghost and in the members of Christ Himself.

‘(2) The *form* of the Sacrament is found in the words and signs authorised from time to time in the Church, by which the persons being married express their consent. It has always been held that this consent must have some distinct and recognised expression, and must refer not to some future, but to some present time, and must express the consent of both parties. This consent has been usually given by expression in words, and by the joining of hands; and in our own Church, as in other parts of the Church, there has usually been the giving and receiving of a ring as an appropriate and expressive ceremony, though such a ceremony would, of course, not be *essential* to the form of the Sacrament, although necessary to its regularity in our own Church.

‘(3) The *ministers* of this Sacrament are the two persons who are being married, who administer it in the valid manner before proper and appointed witnesses. The appointed witness, according to the mind of the Catholic Church, is a priest of the Church, who is also empowered to give the Church’s blessing to those who enter into this sacred relation. Marriage, therefore, solemnised in a registrar’s office between persons against whose marriage there is no canonical bar, is recognised by the Church as a valid Sacrament of Marriage, although certainly irregular, and not to be encouraged, as likely to be wanting in some blessing



through the want of respect shown to the mind of the Church.

‘(4) The effects of the Sacrament of Marriage properly entered into are to produce its sacramental graces: the grace of faithfulness, and therefore of deepening affection; the grace of assistance in the Christian education of children; and the grace of indissolubility. These graces are God’s especial gifts to those who are married, to enable fallen human nature to rise in this respect to His purposes. The first of all duties in a Christian marriage is, of course, faithfulness. The husband and the wife have each given to the other a power which must never be violated. “They two,” our Lord says, “shall be one flesh”; and the Apostle accordingly distinctly teaches that “the wife has not power over her own body, but the husband; and likewise the husband has not power over his own body, but the wife.” Faithfulness to this great obligation is due from each to the other. The blessing of the Sacrament is to enable the fulfilment of this by ennobling and strengthening natural love, and by changing it to a pure and supernatural affection like that of our Lord Jesus Christ to His Church. When the grace of marriage is rightly received and rightly used, what might otherwise be a yoke becomes a bond that is valued and loved; and turns the cares and anxieties which necessarily must come in married life into happiness and blessings which only deepen and strengthen affection. To fallen human nature, there is a natural inclination to inconstancy, “never remaining in one stay,” and there are the trials which come from the changes and chances of this mortal life; and by the special grace of God in marriage there comes strength

to bear such, and readiness in excusing mutually the faults and defects of imperfect creatures, and of holding as sacred beyond all possibility of discussion, or even thought, the solemn promises made at the foot of the Altar.

‘Thus, when we hear statements made . . . as to the impossibility of lasting fidelity between one woman and one man, we have to remember that such statements are made without reckoning with a fact of the first importance, viz. a special gift of the sanctifying grace of God which is offered in the Sacrament of Marriage. From this grace, faithfully used, there come the recognition and acceptance of all sorts of little duties belonging to those who are married, such as gentleness, respect, and care on the side of the man, and the duty of taking pains to provide for the material wants of his family, and to rule and guide that family with wise Christian authority, and not a mere tyrannical dominion; and such duties on the part of a wife as obedience and respect, gentleness and modesty, and diligence in guiding the affairs of her household in a fitting manner. To develop the grace of marriage, a Christian husband and wife must, of course, be faithful to the duty of prayer.

‘And then, again, it is the grace of marriage when well received and used that causes the disposition to look upon the gift of children as a real blessing; and by this, many mothers might be saved from those sinful and corrupt thoughts and actions which have disgraced even our own Christian times. It is by the grace of God that a Christian mother learns to feel that if the birth of her children gives her suffering, and a Christian father learns to feel that if the existence of his children

brings him an added weight of care, yet by the use of that grace they become to both a special blessing. Indeed, S. Paul's statement with reference to the Christian mother and the birth of her children seems to point in some way to an especial blessing to the mother who bears children. It may mean, of course, what is stated in our translation, but it may also mean, and has been thought by some teachers at least to include: (1) "She shall be saved by the Child-bearing," *i.e.* by Blessed Mary having borne the Eternal Word; and (2) "she shall be saved by bringing children into the world," *i.e.* that her sanctification is perfected through the right use of the grace of marriage, which enables her to be a loyal wife and mother.

'And then, again, there is, of course, the duty resting upon both parents of bringing up children as faithful Christians and as good men and women; the grace of marriage enabling this to be done. Fathers ought especially to remember that they are not freed from this obligation by being bound by other obligations of a more public character. Whilst it is true that the mother has her own especial duties in this regard, especially in the early years of childhood, when she is, above all, the representative of the Church to the child, and is the chief power for laying the foundation of holy principles in the soul; still, fathers are far too apt to forget, and very wrongly, that they have their share of duty. As their children are growing older, no one perhaps can take their place, especially in the care of their boys, in guiding the young soul through the critical years of the greatest of changes—except the change of death—the change from youth to manhood.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Perfect Life*, pp. 323-327.



This is the ideal. In fact, through death or through the misconduct of parents, charity and affection have had to supply others to take their place. In many a case these have been as true as, or truer than those of nature's appointment, in fulfilling the duties of father or mother. When this is the case, it is still because of their high sense of the sacredness of all relations involved in that of the marriage bond.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE—BAPTISM, UNITY, CONSENT, UNION

SERIOUS and important as marriage always and everywhere has been, there are special characteristics belonging to it in the Christian dispensation. From the Fall of man there had been an estrangement from his Creator. In the mystery of God's Providence, it was ordained that 'the middle wall of partition' should be 'broken down' in Christ. By the Incarnation, mankind was brought into a close relation with God; the benefits of the Incarnation were to be applied to each single soul, one by one. Being baptized into Christ, each soul 'put on Christ'; God the Holy Spirit came and dwelt in those who were made, by Baptism, 'members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.' Man thus became in a state of grace, and so had power to go on to higher things. In Confirmation he received fuller gifts of the indwelling Spirit, and in Holy Communion he received the Body and Blood of Christ, to 'the strengthening and refreshing of his soul,' and to cleanse his body by Christ's sacred Body and wash his soul by the precious Blood. Man's relation to God was thus entirely

changed in the Christian covenant. When, therefore, according to God's intention and ordinance, a Christian man becomes united in marriage with a Christian woman, this relation is correspondingly exalted. If certain licence had been accorded for a time—as it had—in cases of marriage before Christ came, all this is wholly changed since the Incarnation. (1) Christian marriage as an essential condition, therefore, is *Holy*. It is a holy relation, because it is a relation according to God's ordinance. It goes back to the original intention of the Creator, and with certain added powers. In the account of the Divine institution of Marriage, God Himself condescended to take part in the character of Father. He brought Eve to Adam. Thereby was marked the holiness of the relation. But besides that, under the Christian dispensation, it is holy, because married persons possess in themselves the 'powers of the world to come,' being each of them a temple of the Holy Ghost, so as to make their union holy.

It has been truly said: 'In this holy estate . . . there is a marvellous oneness of holy life, a sense of mutual yearning, mysteriously satisfied in a peacefulness of mutual possession, an interpenetration of the life of each in that of the other, all, in fact, which is implied in that μέγα μυστήριον, that mighty mystery, which no man will ever comprehend in all the depths of its far-reaching sympathies, but which is as much the heritage of high Christian union to-day as it was in the time of the Apostles. It is a union like the union of Christ with His Church. It is holy ground.'

The first characteristic of Christian marriage then is, that it is *holy*.

Closely connected with this essential characteristic is

the fact that for a marriage to be a holy marriage, each of those persons who marry must have received the Sacrament of Baptism. This, indeed, is obviously so, as unbaptized persons are not members of the Christian Church, and the testimony of Christian writers is distinct on the subject. Closely connected with this also is the custom of the benediction of married persons, so general in the Christian Church. The blessing of the priest is not, of course, *essential* to the validity of Christian marriage, although 'the common sentiment in many parts of Christendom has adopted the' opposite 'conclusion.' The benediction is a beautiful ceremony pointing to the holiness of marriage. Even above the mutual consent of the parties 'rises the sense of the hallowing which goes forth in marriage to members of Christ's Body; and this seems to find its utterance in the words of blessing and the uplifted hand of the Christian priest, who stands over the pair as they bow before him and joins them together with the authority of God.' An authoritative blessing is always a blessed thing to those who receive it rightly, and in this case it is of particular solemnity, not because it is *essential* to the validity of marriage, but because it bears witness to the holiness of this relation between Christian man and woman.

Then (2) another essential characteristic of Christian marriage is its *unity* or exclusiveness. The marriage bond by Divine institution, and according to Christianity, which reaffirmed the Divine institution, is the bond between one man and one woman. This is expressed in the solemn words, recorded in the marriage of the first Adam, and repeated by the second Adam



‘they twain shall be one flesh.’ No religion with any really Divine sanction about it at all has ever permitted one wife to have more than one husband. Polyandry, as it is called, however, has been undoubtedly one of those forms of corruption in fallen human nature which has prevailed more or less among various peoples, and at different times, but not among those to whom any true, even though partial, revelation had come.

As to Polygamy, that is quite another matter: in this direction there was a falling away from the original institution in patriarchal times. According to the Mosaic law, it was permitted and sometimes practised amongst the Hebrew people. It seems to have been one of those things which were allowed because of the ‘hardness of their hearts.’ It must be remembered that in the older dispensation human nature had neither the light nor the power which was brought to it by Christ. He who was the Light of the world enabled men to see the true sacredness of marriage; and by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and by the Sacraments, He brought power for men to rule themselves according to God’s law. It is a curious and interesting fact that in spite of the terrible corruptions which marked Roman society there was no permission of polygamy in Roman law. The early Christian Church was never confronted, therefore, with the question of polygamy at all. It was continually coming into contact with the Empire as to questions of divorce, but it had not to fight any law which permitted a man to have more than one wife.

That the Church always felt the unity or exclusiveness of marriage is an indisputable fact; and nothing brings it more vividly before the mind than the strong,



and, as we should think, excessive statements, in opposition to second marriages. Christianity meant to teach that the union of man and woman was to be a union in every department of two personal lives. The Divine intention had been announced at the time of the original institution; that intention had been departed from through the corruption of human nature, even among the chosen people; and our Lord in introducing the great reform of Christianity, re-instituted the original Divine ordinance, that one man and one woman should be husband and wife; that 'they twain' should be 'one flesh.'

(3) And a further essential characteristic of Holy Marriage is *mutual consent*, and the union of two lives. In the Roman law, marriage had been looked upon, as we have seen, as a contract; but the essential point of contract, as viewed by that law, was mutual consent. It has been a principle of Christianity, as shown in the teaching and actions of our Lord Himself, to take common things, and use them for higher purposes. Thus water, one of the commonest of the ordinary elements, was raised to a sacred purpose in Holy Baptism; and bread and wine were made by His appointment the means of conveying His own sacred Body and Blood; and the ordinary paternal action of laying-on of hands, to signify blessing, or commendation, or parental affection, became the outward sign of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, in the Sacraments of Ordination and Confirmation. According to the same kind of principle, the Christian Church seems to have taken Roman customs and Roman law, so far as they were in accordance with Christian revelation, and adopted them and used them. The Roman law was

very insistent upon the necessity of mutual consent. The feeling of the Church, however, on the necessity of consent lay deeper than this; its foundations were laid in conclusions from Divine revelation. In the original institution, Christians, of course, felt that when God brought Eve to Adam, the consent of the two was implicitly understood. God, making His creatures after His own image, endowed them with freewill; and in this first true act of marriage there was implied the consent of both, of which God Himself deigned to be the witness and minister. It has been said, and truly, that it might have pleased God to withdraw any sensible sign of His presence, but that such was not the case. He Himself presented the woman to the man, not only to teach, as we have seen, the holiness of marriage, but also, and above all, to show the need of free consent, on the part of those married, to the sacred contract. It has therefore always been held by the Christian Church that one of the essential characteristics of true marriage is mutual consent.

The great difference between the Roman laws and customs and the Christian is, that the Romans looked upon it only as a contract, whilst the Christian Church looked upon it as a Divine contract, with a supernatural and sacramental character. That which is only a human contract, resting upon merely mutual consent, can, of course, by mutual consent be cancelled. That which is also Divine and Sacramental means a great deal more. In it, one of the parties in the contract is Almighty God, and He, as we shall see, can dissolve it by death, without which it cannot be dissolved. It has been necessary, of course, for the sake of society, that this contract should be solemnly

affirmed and witnessed to, in properly regulated form. The method of giving effect to this affirmation and witness has been various at different times. In early days the marriage of Christians—as regards regulated witness—was very much the same as Roman marriage with the introduction of a Christian benediction, and it took place at first in private houses, and only afterwards in the church. It has been necessary to take care in different ways, in various civilised countries, that there should be proper and undoubted testimony, as far as possible, to the fulfilment of the essential conditions. The consequence has been a variety of ceremonies of marriage; but under the Christian dispensation, the administrators of the Sacrament would appear to be the man and woman themselves when giving their consent publicly, and before properly appointed witnesses. The benediction of the priest is, as we have seen, not *essential*; although in Christians, who are properly instructed, it is an irregular act, and one wanting in right reverence for the Church's regulations and teachings, to forgo that benediction.

(4) It is also an essential characteristic of marriage, that besides the consent given, there should be *a real union of life* to be fully carried out in the holy relation entered into. This union is, as we have seen, so close as to be the chosen representative in the world of 'the mystical union betwixt Christ and His Church.' It is intended to be a union of will and affections, of heart and body, the closest that it is possible to imagine. In order that this may be perfectly according to God's will, the grace of Baptism is revived, and further grace is given for an entire fulfilment of duty, in the Sacrament of Marriage itself.



These, then, are the important, and indeed essential characteristics of Christian marriage. It is holy, because it is according to Divine appointment, and meant to subserve Divine ends, for the birth of children to be brought up in the faith and fear of God, and because if rightly used, it is the means to the sanctification of two souls and the growth of two characters. It implies that the Sacrament of Baptism has been received by both persons, so that both are ‘members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.’ It is exclusive, because it can only be between one man and one woman. It is an act of the mutual consent of responsible wills, made in God’s presence and witnessed to by competent and appointed witnesses; it is a means of the union of two personal lives, body and soul, in the most intimate union conceivable. It is therefore a very sacred and solemn relation, and not a mere contract, into which one man enters with one woman, and one woman with one man, and that under the highest sanctions, and as one of the greatest blessings, and most helpful of Divine gifts to human nature. Such are some of the essential conditions and characteristics of Christian marriage. There is, however, another of the gravest significance, which we must consider in the following chapters.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE—INDISSOLUBILITY I.

ANOTHER essential characteristic of Holy Matrimony is that it is indissoluble. According to Christian teaching, there is but one cause that can break the bond of marriage—that is, death. It is God who fixes the term of our life on earth; it is He under whose government, by whatever means, death comes to each of us. The sin of suicide, for instance, consists in man's venturing to take this prerogative of God into his own hands. Capital punishment, and the final arbitraments of war, are justifiable only because they are carried out by those who are supposed at the time to have God's authority. Life and death therefore are in God's hands. In the same way, the mystery of marriage, which is so closely connected with the mystery of life, is the entering into a serious relation under Divine sanction. In that relation, it is God who 'joins together' the man and the woman, and it is He alone who can 'put them asunder' as regards that relation by the death of either, according to His appointment.

A holy marriage, therefore, according to the teaching of the Christian revelation, cannot be dissolved except

by death. In other words, there is no such thing as divorce, in its proper sense, *i.e.* the final severance of the marriage bond, known to Christianity.

As for many reasons, on which we need not dwell at present, this position has been assailed; and as practically, to an unfortunate extent, in modern times, Christian teaching on the subject has been disregarded by human law, it is necessary to remember the reasons put forward by serious teachers, who have carefully examined the question, for maintaining the teaching of Christianity. But before doing so, it ought to be observed that if marriage can be dissolved for any cause short of death, the essential character of Christian marriage is completely changed; it is no longer a recurrence to the original Divine ordinance; it is no longer a deep and Divine mystery; it is no longer an image of the union of Christ with His Church; it is no longer a real union at all, but a contract, which may be annulled under certain circumstances. In other words, if it be not indissoluble, marriage is a totally different thing from what it has been widely held to be since the Incarnation. The indissolubility, or dissolubility, therefore, of marriage is a vital question. According to the answer given, we have—

*Either* a Divine and mysterious union, ‘which naught on earth can break’;

*Or* a contract which can easily be broken according to varying laws.

In other words, there is such a thing as *Holy Matrimony*, or there is nothing of the kind.

All who examine the subject have to look first at the teaching of Holy Scripture.

## I

(1) As far as early Revelation goes, it would appear that from the necessity of the case marriages between those who are close in kinship were permitted, which afterwards, not only in accordance with Divine precept, but also in accordance with the law of God as revealed in natural causes and effects, have ever been forbidden.

But, putting aside all such exceptional conditions, we know that when the Divine law of marriage was announced, it included the exclusive union of one man with one woman, and indissolubility, except by death. To this, as we know, our Lord Himself refers back, and therefore it is true to say: 'If there be anything plain in the Gospels, this is so; that the first institution of marriage is identical with the Christian institution. . . . Unquestionably,' our Lord 'meant that the words of the law made in Paradise should sink deeply into the hearts of His people, and should be accepted as the standard and measure of all their opinions and proceedings relating to marriage.'

(2) After the Fall, mankind became corrupt; and, above all, in respect of such matters as that before us, polygamy was contrary to the original law of marriage. It took place, however, as a concession to human weakness, permitted on account of the hardness of men's hearts—*πρὸς σκληροκαρδίαν*. 'The old law dealt with polygamy and divorce alike.' And it has been justly argued that there is more to be said from Old Testament teaching for polygamy than there is for divorce; but no one pretends that polygamy can claim any sanction whatever from Christianity. Indeed, neither of these departures from the Divine institution was



instituted by the Mosaic Law. That law was a great reform. It found polygamy and divorce in possession, according to long established and corrupt custom. Moses did not attempt to suppress either of these customs, but he did restrain and amend them, and put them within strict limitations. As regards divorce, it was henceforth to be granted only under careful legal forms, and for a definite cause. No encouragement was given to it. And in the prophecy of Malachi, amongst the latest utterances of the Old Dispensation, it was taught, 'I hate putting away, saith the Lord, the God of Israel.'<sup>1</sup> Besides this, in the Old Testament generally, it has been truly argued that the Divine meaning as to marriage has been wonderfully brought out by the fact that God's relation to His people, and the relation of His people to God, is constantly compared to marriage, to a marriage too which excludes all other ties of the kind, which is lasting and cannot be dissolved, and that to the breach of such ties, and to the having many lovers, apostasy and unfaithfulness to God are also constantly compared. It is an argument of real force to say that any one whose mind and heart were deeply imbued with the teachings of the ancient Scriptures on the subject would naturally come to Christianity, with the expectation of finding marriage treated there as a very high and holy thing, and as a bond that could not be dissolved for any reason whatever; that in this way those Scriptures would naturally act as a schoolmaster to bring him to Christ; and that he would naturally be much disappointed if he were to find in Christianity—in which power is promised and given to counteract

<sup>1</sup> Mal. ii. 16, R.V.



the old hardness of heart—that such concessions as were allowed for the time under the Old Law could possibly be permitted.

From the study of the Old Testament, therefore, we are led to the conclusion that the original institution of indissoluble marriage is the only Divine one; that anything to the contrary was a mere concession, because of human corruption, to be entirely withdrawn when the Incarnation of the Eternal Word brought ‘the powers of the world to come’ into human nature, so enabling it, if it would, to fulfil God’s law.<sup>1</sup>

## II

The most important testimony of Holy Scripture will, of course, be found in the utterances of our Lord. But before we proceed to examine them, or any other passage of the New Testament, it will be well to remember the following important point. The real question is, as to the *re-marriage* of separated persons. No one denies that there may arise such painful

<sup>1</sup> It is to be noted that Deut. xxiv. 1-4 only refers to, and does not expressly sanction, re-marriage in the contemplated case. The translation in the Authorised Version (which is not corrected in the Revised Version) may give an impression to the English reader that re-marriage was expressly sanctioned. This translation is pronounced by learned authorities to be incorrect. See, *e.g.*, Driver (*International Critical Commentary*) *in loco*.

Further, it is to be noted that in cases where re-marriage has taken place, the woman is said to have been ‘defiled.’ I believe that the same Hebrew word is used for adultery in Lev. xviii. 20; Num. v. 13, 14, 20, and its ordinary meaning has to do with pollution. It seems evident that this very restricted allowance, with the description of the re-marriage as if it were adultery, was, as our Lord says, ‘for the hardness of your hearts’—*πρὸς σκληροκαρδίαν*.

circumstances as to allow of, or even necessitate, *separation*. This Christianity does not deny; what is denied is, that in any circumstances there can be divorce, properly so called; that is, the real breaking of the marriage bond. The true question therefore is, Can man or woman once married, and then for any cause separated, contract marriage with any other person during the lifetime of the former partner?

With this important proviso in our mind, we come to the recorded utterances of our Lord which bear upon the question. And, confining ourselves for the present to such passages as bear upon it directly, and not merely by way of inference, those passages are four in number.

(1) We open our New Testament at S. Mark x. 10-12, and we read in our Revised Version—

‘And in the house the disciples asked Him again of this matter. And He saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her: and if she herself shall put away her husband, and marry another, she committeth adultery.’

We notice—

(a) With regard to the passage in general. These words are a private exposition of a passage in our Lord’s public teaching. That teaching was evidently a cause (as we read elsewhere<sup>1</sup>) of heart-searching among the disciples, and made them press the question further in their private communings. It does not therefore stand alone. It is, confessedly, an explanation of an explanation, and is of the nature of a last word.

(b) Bearing this in mind, we observe further, that the passage lends no support to the contention

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. xix. 10.

that a marriage, once validly constituted, is dissoluble except by death. No exception is so much as hinted at, but it is positively stated

- (i) That for a husband to divorce his wife, and (for it is here that the sin of adultery begins) marry another, is adultery. And
- (ii) Similarly, that for a wife to put away her husband, and marry another, is adultery.

(2) Bearing these conclusions in our mind, we turn to S. Luke xvi. 18, R.V.—

‘Every one that putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth one that is put away from a husband committeth adultery.’

Here we notice—

- (a) That the words are of the nature of a public indictment. Our Lord proclaimed the fundamental truth, ‘Ye cannot serve God and mammon,’<sup>1</sup> amid the derisive laughter of the Pharisees. Their reception of God’s truth drew from Him a rebuke directed against a false and perilous self-justification. There is a danger, He seems to say, lest that which is utterly false and utterly wrong should be not merely glozed over, but should clothe itself, as it were, in the garb of right. ‘That which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God’<sup>2</sup> It cannot be, He continues in effect, that what God intended in the law can be lightly disregarded. ‘It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the law to fall.’<sup>3</sup> And He goes on, in words

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xvi. 13, 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 17.



that must have struck home to the hearts of many who thought that they were safely sheltering themselves beneath the ægis of the law, to declare without reservation or exception

- (i) That every case (as above (b) (i)) of re-marriage is adultery; and further
- (ii) That to marry a divorced wife is to sin with a married woman. It is adultery.

Taking these two passages as they stand, we seem to get a clear and consistent view of the case that marriage is, as we have said, a relation and not only a contract and that the parties to it enter upon a new relationship, a relationship constituted by God as really and truly as any other human relationship, as truly, *e.g.* as the relation of brother and sister, or parent and child—a relationship, therefore, which it is as impossible for man to break in the one case as the other. Whatever else may come between them, father is father, and son is son, and brother is brother, and sister is sister, while the world stands. And husband is husband, and wife is wife, ‘till *death* . . . do part.’ To put away a wife and marry another is to attempt to break what man cannot break. It is adultery. To put away a husband and marry another is to attempt to do what man cannot do. It is adultery. To marry a divorced woman, and, by parity of reasoning—under a covenant in whose contemplation, in Christ Jesus, ‘there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female’<sup>1</sup>—to marry a divorced man, is to simulate a bond that cannot bind. It is adultery.

Is there, then, anything in our Lord’s teaching, we

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iii. 28; cf. Col. iii. 11.

proceed to ask, so strongly contrariant to this as to practically deny it, and to render these conclusions nugatory?

It would seem that, at the least, these conditions must be fulfilled before we can safely say so. The evidence must be at any rate equally definite, certain, and plain if it is to throw doubt on the conclusion already arrived at. If it appear indecisive, the interpretation must be sought, first in the light of such further illumination as is supplied by other passages in the New Testament, and afterwards in the witness of the writers of the primitive Church. Premising thus much, we turn to—

(3) S. Matt. v. 31, 32, R.V.—

‘It was said also, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery.’

Leaving out of consideration for the moment the excepted cause of fornication, and reserving it for fuller consideration below, we notice —

(a) In general, that the passage has to do with the scope of the ‘bill of divorcement.’ This case under the seventh commandment is one of a series;<sup>1</sup> and it is observable that, unlike the cases adduced under the third and the sixth commandments, it is not introduced by the formula, ‘It was said to them of old time,’<sup>2</sup> for this is precisely what it was not.

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. v. 21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43.

<sup>2</sup> The same omission appears in ver. 27 if, with the Revisers, we give up the Received Text. Here the quotation from the Ten Command-

In other words, our Lord is not *altering* the Mosaic Law, but *correcting* a *wrong interpretation of it*.<sup>1</sup> In the case of divorce, our Lord does not say, 'It has been said to them of old time,' *i.e.* it has been told to the people by Moses, because what the Rabbis said about divorce had *not* been told by Moses. Moses had placed the question of divorce under strict limitations; the lax interpreters of one Rabbinical School had come to allow the mere giving of 'a writing of divorcement,' in place of all those limitations. Accordingly, our Lord says in this instance *not* 'it was said by Moses,' but 'it has come to be a saying'; *i.e.* it has come to be a saying through the corruption of Rabbinical laxity.

The Jewish practice in the matter was a wholesale gloss upon the text, so entirely contrary alike to the letter and the spirit of it, that, like the Corban, it came within the scope of the censure, 'making the command-

ments does not admit of question. It is equally with ver. 31 a 'saying,' but a saying of very different authenticity, and we may almost paraphrase the passage as 'the *words* were . . . but *I* say unto you . . .'

<sup>1</sup> Cf. verses 38, 43, for instances of similar perversions and oppressive exactions under colour of the Law. The Law had bidden men (Lev. xix. 18) to love their neighbour; popular prejudice had conceded the licence 'and hate thine enemy.' Similarly, the *judicial sentence* (cf. Exod. xxi. 22-5; Lev. xxiv. 17-20; Deut. xix. 21) of the Law, giving an eye for an eye, came to be looked at in the light of a principle of conduct; and what the Law intended for the inculcation of *equity* was falsely regarded as a direct incentive to retaliation. It is observable that our Lord at once enlarged (ver. 28) the scope of the seventh commandment, and restrained (ver. 32) abuses under it. The Law had provided (Deut. xxiv. 1.) that *in the event of a specified case of putting away, a bill of divorcement should be given for the protection of the woman*. Popular casuistry had inverted the procedure, and made (ver. 31) *a bill of divorcement a process of repudiation by which any wife could be put away*.



ment of God of none effect by your tradition'<sup>1</sup>—explaining away the law which they professed to interpret. The well-known exception in Deuteronomy<sup>2</sup> comes in naturally. It is the Divine limitation of the licence which the law permitted *πρὸς σκληροκαρδίαν*, 'for the hardness of men's hearts.'<sup>3</sup> Even so, it must have spoken like the voice of accusing conscience to many of His hearers who had permitted themselves, in fancied security, a licence undreamed of by the law as given by Moses—a warning and a condemnation that are never out of date while the Christian law is wrested like the law of Moses, to the clean contrary of its purpose. Our days have seen the protection which Almighty God devised for the preservation of the purity of home turned to that home's corruption. And surely the high sanction of God, and the promise of a 'godly seed,'<sup>4</sup> are invoked in vain, as men swear 'till death . . . do part' with lips that even now discount the words they utter, and hearts that already forecast the end, when the false faith they pledge to-day shall have its consummation in to-morrow's falser vows, and marriage shall prove procuress to those very sins against which it was designed to be a safeguard and a remedy.

(b) As it is, it is declared that such false grounds of repudiation are null and void. They effect nothing. They merely give an opportunity for sin.

(i) To marry such a woman is to commit adultery.

(ii) To be the occasion of such an opportunity is to be a partaker of the sin. It is to make her an adulteress.

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. xv. 6.

<sup>3</sup> S. Matt. xix. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. xxiv. 1-4.

<sup>4</sup> Mal. ii. 15.

(c) Nothing is said definitely as to the position of the lawfully rejected wife. Neither is anything said as to whether the husband, in such a case, might marry again. Concerning the first, it is enough to say that—whatever mitigation may have prevailed in point of fact—the law in such cases provided death by stoning. No peculiar condemnation is called for in the circumstances. The sense of the law is plain enough, and the sin and breach of the seventh commandment are, *ex hypothesi*, plain to demonstration. The position of the husband remains to be considered below.

(4) S. Matt. xix. 3-9, R.V.—

‘And there came unto Him Pharisees, tempting Him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And He answered and said, Have ye not read, that He which made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the twain shall become one flesh? So that they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.<sup>1</sup> They say unto Him, Why then

<sup>1</sup> Cf. The Second Part of the Sermon against Adultery, *Homilies*, 1562:—‘Of this vice cometh a great part of the divorces, which nowadays be so commonly accustomed, and used by men’s private authority, to the great displeasure of God, and the breach of the most holy knot, and bond of matrimony. . . . O abomination! Christ our Saviour, very God and man, coming to restore the law of His heavenly Father unto the right sense, understanding, and meaning, among other things, reformed the abuse of this law of God. For whereas the Jews used a long sufferance, by custom, to put away their wives at their pleasure, for every cause, Christ, correcting that evil custom, did teach, that *if any man put away his wife, and marrieth another, for any cause, except only for adultery* (which then was death by the law),

did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it hath not been so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery.'

Here we are face to face, once more, with the question of the latitude allowed by the 'bill of divorcement.' As an echo of the prevailing laxity, voicing the 'extreme left' of the opinion of conflicting schools, comes the question, 'Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife *for every cause?*' The answer takes the questioners into another world, where the question answers itself rather than is answered, and where, in fact, the difficulty is seen to be illusory. The treatment of it is so important and, in a sense, so unexpected, that before considering the difficulties which the passage contains, it is worth while to consider carefully the *positive* teaching which it establishes. Briefly stated, it appears—

(i) That in His own teaching on marriage our Lord recurs to its original institution, 'in the time of man's innocency.' This is fundamental, *i.e.* in arguing about marriage, in so far as it comes into Christian consideration, it must be dealt with on this basis.

(ii) And this involves—

(a) For the marriage relationship, one man, one woman. The question of successive marriage,

*he was an adulterer, and forced also his wife so divorced to commit adultery* (Matt. xix.) if she were joined to any other man, and the man also, so joined with her, to commit adultery.'



not gone into here, is dealt with categorically by S. Paul in the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, and by inference in 1 S. Tim. v. 11, 14, and elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

(β) A relationship *closer* than that of parent and child, 'the twain shall become one flesh'; and having superior and more engrossing claims, 'for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife.'

(γ) A relationship established *by the act of God*, and therefore only to be divorced by the act of God. 'What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.'

This admits, nay, rather, it almost demands, the obvious question, 'If this is so, "why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away?"'

But notice, first, *that it is so*. On this our faith in Christ, and on this, for the matter of that, the whole logical force of the argument depends. It is idle to go on to consider the force of the objection until we have determined with ourselves that the declared teaching of Jesus Christ represents the truth of God concerning marriage. If it does not, if without blasphemy we may traverse the whole position, the particular objection sinks into insignificance. It becomes a matter of the very smallest moment whether this or that detail of the fabric will stand when we know that the whole foundation is insecure.

But once let us enter into the certainty that 'the foundation of God standeth sure.' Once let us grasp that the facts alleged by Jesus Christ concerning

<sup>1</sup> Cf., e.g. 1 S. Tim. iii. 2, 12; v. 9; S. Titus i. 6.

marriage are the true facts, and that marriage is in point of fact what He has stated it to be. Once let us concede as our first principle of interpretation, 'Let God be true,' even though it should involve as a consequence, 'but every man a liar.'<sup>1</sup> Then, when 'If it be so' has passed into 'It is,' we may ask in all seriousness the question pressed home with insulting triumph by His enemies, 'If it be so—seeing that it is so—since marriage *is* what Jesus Christ has expressly declared it to be, "why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her away?"'

The answer is confessedly difficult—difficult both textually and as a matter of interpretation. But in the forefront there stand, like sentinels, two words of warning—it was permitted 'for the hardness of men's hearts,' and 'from the beginning it was not so.'

Then it would seem, assuredly, that if the licence of the law was a temporary concession, permitted lest bad should lead to worse; if it belonged to a time and condition of things which is designated as one of *σκληροκαρδία*, when men's hearts were not accessible to God's grace,<sup>2</sup> it is a concession which, when that state of impenetrability had passed, would naturally cease. And now that state *has* passed, and we live in the enabling power<sup>3</sup> of that dispensation which the prophet Ezekiel saw afar off: 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. S. John i. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Acts xiii. 39; Rom. viii. 3, 4; Phil. iv. 13.

heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And . . . I will also save you from all your uncleannesses.’<sup>1</sup>

And equally, and no less, it would seem, that if ‘from the beginning it was not so,’ *i.e.* that divorce was contemplated; and if we are to revert in our Christian conception of marriage to the state of things which obtained in the beginning when ‘God made them male and female,’ it is difficult to see what room is left in that relationship for any interference by the mere act of man. It would require, we repeat it, ‘confirmation strong as Holy Writ,’ proof not merely that certain words are used, but also of the meaning necessarily attaching to those words, to assure us that we are right, in the teeth of such accumulated evidence, in admitting that (nullity apart) Christian marriage is or can be in any circumstances dissoluble except by death, *i.e.* by the act of God.

(a) We have no wish to insist unduly on the textual difficulty. Still, it must not be overlooked that the text in verse 9, which contains what has been urged as an apparent exception, allowing the re-marriage of a husband who has put away an adulterous wife, is uncertain. Probably it is enough to say that while its acknowledged difficulty affords no reason for omitting it, neither does its acknowledged uncertainty afford secure ground for building a large and weighty superstructure of teaching upon it.

(b) Taking, however, the passage as it stands, even so, it admits, as a mere matter of construction, of

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27, 29.



more than one interpretation. The words 'except for fornication' may be referred quite possibly to 'whosoever shall put away his wife,' leaving the addition 'and marry another' as an explanatory clause, signifying the point at which that which was hitherto mere repudiation (whether, as in most instances, a wrong, or, as in one particular instance, a just one) passes into the sin of adultery. So long as such an interpretation is possible without doing violence to language, is it safe—to use no stronger word—to assume that a contrary interpretation which *prima facie* cuts across all our Lord's teaching as to the marriage of Christian people, is preferable to one which harmonises simply and naturally with that teaching as expressed in every other place? If we are to assume, for the sake of argument, what some are ready to assume, viz. that what is intended is that the bond of marriage, otherwise indissoluble, is dissolved, or becomes dissoluble, by an act of adultery on the part of one of the parties; *i.e.* that the force of the passage is intended rather to establish the right of remarriage (in a single case) than to prohibit divorce; we are constrained to ask the question, Is not the natural—we had almost said the necessary—order, 'Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another, except it be for fornication, committeth adultery'?

- (c) But if there are difficulties, whether of text or of construction, that call for careful consideration, there are difficulties also of interpretation. It is a common but, many think, erroneous interpretation to treat our Lord's use of the word *πορνεία*

(fornication) in this passage as if *μοιχεία* (adultery) were in fact intended. The last word has not been said when it is alleged that *πορνεία* and *μοιχεία* admit of being used thus interchangeably, *i.e.* the lesser for the larger sense. The difficulty is not met until the surrounding circumstances have also been taken into account, *i.e.* until we have accounted for the appearance of *πορνεία* in *this place*. That this word cannot be used, or is never used, thus loosely, we are not greatly concerned to maintain. It is proverbially difficult to prove a negative. But what is important, for our purpose, to note is that it is not so used either in the New Testament or in the Septuagint. Many passages which have been claimed on this behalf are found on a closer examination not to bear out the contention, but to rebut it.<sup>1</sup> But even if such passages can be found elsewhere than in Scripture, they do not affect the issue here. What the supporters of this view need to show is, bearing in mind Who the speaker was, how, in a crucial passage of the kind, we have *μοιχᾶται* . . . *μοιχᾶται*, and in S. Matt. v. 32 *ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχευθῆναι* (*μοιχᾶσθαι*) . . . *μοιχᾶται*, in close juxtaposition with and therefore—are we not almost forced to the conclusion?—in plain contrast, or at least in contradistinction, to *πορνεία*. A man may speak of robbery when he means sacrilege, or of homicide when he means murder, but not when he is drawing up legal pleadings or writing a book of moral theology. The morality of language requires that in interpreting the meaning of

<sup>1</sup> See Döllinger, *The First Age of the Church*, Appendix iii.

words some regard shall be had to the speaker and the occasion ; and it is just these elements that seem to be lost sight of in the interpretation which identifies the two words in this place.

- (d) And if πορνεία (fornication) means πορνεία (fornication), and not what is, strictly speaking, adultery, it becomes more impossible than ever to claim this passage in support of any theory that adultery breaks or makes soluble the marriage bond—not merely, *i.e.* that it affords a possible ground for separation, but that marriage—the fundamental relation of husband and wife—ceases *ipso facto* in the very act to remain binding. This being so, it can only refer to a well-understood and well-defined exception. That there was one such exception we know. That that exception is referred to, in a gospel confessedly addressed to Jewish readers, we may not unreasonably suppose : ‘ By the law she was liable to death. In such cases of divorce there was properly no dissolving of the matrimonial bond ; for every marriage took place under the condition recognised by the law, that the bride should be a maid ; and deception in a point so essential to Oriental notions invalidated the whole act, for in such a case the man’s consent could not be supposed.’ And again, the same writer continues : ‘ This ’—the contrary—‘ interpretation of the words of Christ goes against language, history, and logic. The language will not bear it ; for Christ carefully distinguishes, as is done everywhere in Scripture, between the two words, one (πορνεία) referring to unchastity in the single, the other (μοιχεία) to unfaithfulness in the married, or what



is properly called adultery. The view that the former term is a generic one for all kinds of carnal sin, including breach of matrimonial fidelity as a species, is erroneous, and only devised to meet the case. It is inconceivable that Christ, while engaged in inculcating the inviolable sanctity of the marriage bond and reducing the possibilities of divorce within the narrowest limits, should have used in a crucial statement an ambiguous word, leaving ample scope to those desirous of divorce, when just afterwards He twice uses the proper word.<sup>1</sup>

Viewed in this light, the words seem less an allowance than an indictment. How many of those who stood around Him had strained the law in which they trusted beyond the breaking point? With a light *insouciance* they had brought their question, 'tempting Him.' They had pressed home, with a pitiless logic, the instance of Moses that should condemn Him. And, lo! the law in which they made their boast<sup>2</sup> has turned against them. In the answer of Christ we seem to hear the echo of those words, so pathetic in their condemnation, 'Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust'<sup>3</sup>—not Moses as misunderstood and travestied by his commentators, but 'Moses, the man of God,' who gave them the law which they had not kept.<sup>4</sup> That the law, as re-enacted by Jesus Christ, seemed to His hearers one of terrible stringency, we may gather from the comment of His disciples. They cannot have

<sup>1</sup> Döllinger, *The First Age of the Church*, pp. 264-266.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Rom. ii. 23.

<sup>3</sup> S. John v. 45.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. S. John vii. 19; Acts vii. 53.

been ignorant of the teaching of the severer Jewish school of Shammai, but the new doctrine seemed to place marriage on an altogether different plane.

‘*If the case of the man is so with his wife,*’ they said, ‘it is not expedient to marry.’<sup>1</sup> However false the conclusion—and our Blessed Lord showed that it was false<sup>2</sup>—it may serve for a terse summary of the question. Had marriage been a contract, terminable at will by a single act of either partner, would the burden have appeared so intolerable? If marriage be what this Church and realm received in the days when Church and realm were one, it well might be that marriage might seem to threaten a lifelong servitude. But can it be said seriously that marriage qualified by Act of Parliament has any terrors of the kind for our semi-pagan society? Is any man—is any woman—deterred from entering on the bonds of a profaned matrimony by the fear that these bonds will not sit loose enough, or that they will not admit, if the marriage prove irksome, of an easy dissolution? Are the secular courts so hard? Are even the clergy so unbending as to wring from the fears and hesitations of society the faint echo of that cry, ‘*If the case of the man is so with his wife, it is not expedient to marry*’? And if they are not—as we know they are not—may it not be simply due to the fact that the world has lost the point of view, the eminence of God, from which alone the aptness of the objection is discernible, that ‘it is not expedient to marry’?

And if it be otherwise. If marriage be not such a state as the men who planned our Prayer Book dreamed of; if the error is theirs, and marriage be but a

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. xix. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 11, 12.

pledging of mutual vows that have lost their meaning even while the words are said, and the marriage state but a life that is lived at the lower level of concubinage in its insecurity; must we not sorrowfully recall the words with infinitely sadder meaning, 'If the case of the man is so with his wife,' if grace has failed, and we are yet under the law and not under grace, 'it is not expedient to marry'—and resign to Shakespeare the heights which the Gospel has not scaled, and the untrodden glory of the prospect which Christians have failed to reach?—

‘Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Merchant of Venice*, Act II. sc. 7.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE—INDISSOLUBILITY II.

IN treating of the Indissolubility of Marriage we have confined ourselves, so far, to the utterances of our Lord. We have taken those words of His which deal directly with the subject of divorce, and examined them in the light of their occasion and the context, and endeavoured, so far as possible, from a full consideration of the circumstances, to arrive at their meaning. These passages, as we have seen, are four in number. And from a detailed examination we have claimed to find in them a consentient voice declaring unmistakably the entire indissolubility of the marriage bond; and justifying, as we believe, the language which the Church of England holds consistently concerning it.

But that position has been traversed. The same words have been bent to a contrary conclusion, and used upon the other side. A great and weighty superstructure has been built upon a slender and insecure foundation; and we are asked to revise our whole conception of Christian marriage, and the marriage bond and estate, on the strength of a—to say the least of it—doubtful interpretation of a somewhat doubtful text. Sometimes the request is seriously made by

advocates who are far from wishing to strain in any way the words of Scripture. Frequently it comes to us in the very unsatisfying form of an offhand reference to Scripture, as though the language of a Scripture phrase were decisive in itself without further consideration of any kind.

Having striven, therefore, in the first instance, to determine the plain sense of Scripture, the question arises, Have we, after all, misunderstood our Lord? It is true that the conclusion we have arrived at gives us a clear and coherent and self-consistent account of what is meant by Christian marriage and the married state, while the opposite view brings in a discordant element which reduces every idea of marriage as a divinely constituted relationship to chaos and confusion. So far, then, if the probabilities on either side should appear to be equally balanced, the case for indissolubility may claim to possess the field.

Before, therefore, we proceed to revise our verdict out of hand, it will be well to enlarge the scope of the evidence. If, as regards the matter of dissoluble or indissoluble marriage, it is a question whether we or our opponents have misunderstood our Lord, it is worth while to ask, How have other people understood Him? and especially, How have they whose inspired teaching is preserved for us in the New Testament understood Him? No review of our Lord's teaching would be complete which did not take into account what, for want of a better word, we may call the 'commentary' of the New Testament. Here, if anywhere, we may expect to find a practical exposition of His words. Is there any passage from first to last which by any inference, however remote, can be pleaded in support

of the conception of Christian marriage as a dissoluble contract? I believe that there is none. The case of a heathen connection<sup>1</sup> is altogether different. Such a union is not necessarily even marriage *secundum naturam*, for it does not necessitate, and may even categorically exclude,<sup>2</sup> the intention (irrespective of any post-nuptial sin) of taking a partner for life.

The remaining important passages from Scripture on this subject are to be found in the writings of S. Paul. And we may fairly ask, If *we* have misunderstood our Lord's teaching, how does S. Paul understand Him?

(a) The Apostle finds it necessary to instruct the Corinthians in various subjects touching the relation of the sexes. To any Christian, it must appear, of course, certain that the rules laid down by the Apostle are applications of our Lord's recorded teaching, or statements of what S. Paul knew by direct revelation received from Christ. It has been truly said that in these teachings the duties of married persons are referred to the normal principle, 'They two shall be one flesh';<sup>3</sup> the duties of the unmarried, to another normal saying (which, however, S. Paul carefully points out, is a counsel, not a command), 'He that is able to receive,' the doctrine of virginity, and he only, 'let him receive it.'<sup>4</sup> First, S. Paul forbids polygamy; next, he gives certain practical directions about married life; and next—which closely touches our subject—he speaks as follows: 'Unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. terminable contracts among the Shia Mohammedans.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. vi. 16.

<sup>4</sup> S. Matt. xix. 12.



husband: but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.'<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to close our eyes to the fact that these words are strictly on the lines of our Lord's teaching. He gives an unqualified command entirely opposed to divorce. It is well to remember also that S. Paul was writing to Corinth, where sins against the marriage vow, and kindred sins, were likely to be most common. Now, it is inconceivable that if our Lord had laid down a rule that in certain circumstances divorce should be permitted, S. Paul should have been entirely silent, especially to such a people, about such a rule; and that, in fact, he should have flatly contradicted it. It is difficult for a Christian to doubt that S. Paul had received a direct revelation from heaven on the subject, to the effect that Christian marriage is indissoluble except by death.

(b) S. Paul again touches the question in his Epistle to the Ephesians;<sup>2</sup> he is speaking of certain practical duties, and amongst others, those of married life. In order to bring home to the mind of the Church the important character of these duties, he dwells upon the oneness produced by marriage, and takes the Incarnation of our Blessed Lord and His indissoluble union with His Church as the only adequate illustration of the unity produced by marriage. If S. Paul had known that part of the Divine law was that marriage could be dissolved, he could never have used an illustration so entirely inapt.

(c) And again, in the Epistle to the Romans, when

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 10, 11.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. v. 22 sqq. ; cf. 2 Cor. xi. 2 ; S. James iv. 4.

writing from Corinth, where he would be sure to have to 'set in order' things of this kind, he makes use of the law of marriage as an illustration of the passing from the earlier dispensation to the dispensation of the Gospel. In the course of this, he says: 'The woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth. . . . So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.'<sup>1</sup> It has been said that these words of the Apostle do not touch the question, because he had not the whole subject before him then, and because he is using only a passing illustration. This objection, however, can have no force, for it is not conceivable that S. Paul could have used an illustration which, if marriage was dissoluble by anything except by death, was completely out of place. The passage—whatever confusion there may appear to be in the form of the illustration—in any case teaches this, that the Apostle believed that nothing but death could undo the marriage bond.

On the whole, then, the testimony of Scripture is clear that according to the law of Christ, which refers back to the original Divine institution, the bond of marriage is so deep, supernatural, and mysterious that it cannot be severed in any circumstances or for any reason, except by God's decree of death to one of the parties concerned.

The only words, then, in the New Testament which can on any pretext be claimed as lending any countenance to divorce and re-marriage in the case of adultery

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vii. 2, 3.

do not, as we have seen, bear out the contention. At the most they provide so insecure a foundation that it would be unsafe to build upon them any argument which has them for its sole support. And far less can we regard them as sufficient to establish a doctrine of the gravest consequences to society, and directly opposed to the consentient teaching of the New Testament with regard to marriage.<sup>1</sup>

Taking all these matters into consideration, and not forgetting that no writers of the first three centuries quote these words as sanctioning re-marriage, it is evident that this interpretation must be put aside entirely; and having done so, there is no doubt that the New Testament teaches with consentient voice that the law of Christ does not allow the re-marriage of either party, after separation, or in other words, rules that the marriage bond cannot be dissolved except by death. The doctrine contained in the New Testament, therefore, implies that indissolubility is one essential element of Holy Matrimony.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Edm. Bunny, *Of divorce for adulterie, and marrying againe: that there is no sufficient warrant to do so* (pub. Jos. Barnes, Oxford, 1610), p. 169—'Whereas, therefore, His words may indeed have another meaning, and such as agreeth with much other Scripture, wee doe not see, but that well, may wee doubt, that such sence as agreeth with much other Scripture, is a great deale more likely to bee His meaning, than that which standeth alone by it selfe, and hath nothing else in all the Bible neither in the Old Testament, nor in the New, that accordeth with it.'



## CHAPTER X

### THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE—INDISSOLUBILITY III.

As was to be expected, considering the emphatic character of the teaching of Scripture, the witness of the Church has been, on the whole, in the same direction. There have been variations in the matter, as was also to be expected on a subject so closely affecting human passion; nevertheless, speaking generally, the weight of the authority of the Church has been opposed to the possibility of dissolving the marriage bond.

It is impossible and undesirable to go into the question in detail; it has been thoroughly debated by the most competent authorities; but we may notice these points. In the first place, the testimony of the period following Apostolic times is of the highest value.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *e.g.* Hermas, *Command.* iv.: ‘And I said unto him, . . . Sir, if a man shall have a wife . . . and shall catch her in adultery; doth a man sin that continues to live still with her? . . . And he said unto me, . . . if a man shall know his wife to have offended, and she shall not repent of her sin, but go on still in her fornication, and a man shall continue nevertheless to live with her, he shall become guilty of her sin, and partake with her in her adultery. And I said unto him, What, therefore, is to be done, if the woman continues on in her sin? He answered, Let her husband put her away, and let him continue by himself. But if he shall put away his wife, and marry another, he also doth commit adultery. . . . But he ought to receive

It shows us what was, in all probability, the opinion held in the various parts of the Church by those in whose minds Apostolic tradition would be most fresh and have most weight. During the first three centuries no writer can be found who approves of re-marriage after divorce; 'while there are repeated and most decided assertions of the principle that such marriages are unlawful.' There are, however, some cases mentioned of Christians who acted contrary to this principle, sheltering themselves under the law of the State, which allowed of laxity in the matter, and of the lax conduct of some bishops in permitting this. On the whole, however, the Churches of Syria, and Egypt, and Africa, and Spain, and Gaul, were faithful to the Scripture teaching and the Apostolic tradition. In Africa there seems to have been some 'conflict of opinion; but even if we attach to . . . evidence . . . the utmost that can be claimed for what is confessedly doubtful, there is nothing on the other side that can outweigh the positive statements of the earliest and latest authorities. . . . It is very significant, moreover, that not a single Father appeals to that particular verse of Scripture,<sup>1</sup> or at least that reading of it, which alone can supply inspired authority for the sanction of re-marriage; while some of them comment upon, or quote it, under

the offender, if she repents. . . . And for this cause a man that putteth away his wife ought not to take another, because she may repent. This act is alike both in the man and in the woman. . . . But it is therefore commanded that both the man and the woman should remain unmarried, because such persons may repent' (Hone's Trans.). See Tournely, *Prælectiones Theologicæ de Sacramento Matrimonii*, Quæstio v. Arg. II., for a list of authorities, including Hermas, S. Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria.

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. xix. 9.

a different form. There is no doubt that separation or divorce (for the words are often interchanged) is treated as legitimate for one cause, viz. adultery; it is even said that it was the duty of a husband to put away an adulterous wife.<sup>1</sup> On the whole, we find, then, that in the first age of the Church, the testimony of which is of immense value, the bond was treated as indissoluble; for even in those cases in which there seems most tendency towards an approach to laxity, Christian teachers and Christian witnesses seem always to contemplate the possibility of, and to look hopefully to and encourage, the reconciliation of the husband and the wife. Where this was the case, there could be no belief in divorce *a vinculo*, i.e. in the real severance of the marriage bond.

As time went on, in certain parts of the Church and in certain cases, there was some laxity in the matter. The influence of 'the world' was felt more and more, as it is now, in the Church. Where the State and the Church became more or less intermingled, the influence of the State was, as always, in the direction of laxity and corruption. Accordingly, in the East, for the most part, where the State interfered most in religious matters, there was greater laxity. The Western Church stood firm. The Council of Arles and the African Code, together with the greatest of the Fathers in the West, would not allow of re-marriage after divorce. In the East, S. Basil is constantly quoted as a great authority: his attitude on the question is interesting, as illustrating the unhappy weakness of some in authority in later times, the evil consequences of which are plainly to be seen every day. It has

<sup>1</sup> Luckock, *History of Marriage*, pp. 132, 133 (edition 2).



been said of S. Basil as follows: 'From the point of view of principle, of "our Lord's decision," of the theology of the subject, as we might say, S. Basil is as clear as the day. He stands where all the other great Christian doctors stand. He knows nothing of permitted re-marriage after divorce; but he is perplexed and hesitating as to anything like penal action. In the sixty years which have elapsed since Constantine avowed his conviction of the truth of Christianity, the world has crowded into the Church, till the current morality of Christians has cast itself rather in the mould of the secular code than in that of the law of Christ. As the secular code would exempt from all blame in re-marriage, both the man who has put away a guilty wife, and the man whom the wife has put away, so, at least in the eastern part of the empire, does Christian society.' The fact was that 'the world' had so succeeded in corrupting Christian principle, that opportunism and expediency and general perplexity had set in with some of the rulers of the Christian Church, as they have done since. S. Basil is an instance in point. He practically declined the conflict, and let things go. Had he stood firm, he might have prevented much of the later laxity of the Eastern Church. It was, of course, not right to teach, as he did, the truth on the question, and then not to attempt to enforce it. In regard to his conduct, however, the difficulties of the time have to be remembered. These cannot *defend* a great Christian ruler in neglecting his duty through weakness, but they may, to some extent, excuse the fault. In regard to this, it has been truly said, 'Let those judge S. Basil who know what it is in the present day to face an almost overwhelming

consensus of English society on this very subject.' Such men know that there is needed for right action, not only faith and obedience, but a clear perception of the great issues involved. Failing this, the promptings of individual charity (we should rather say, easy good-nature), combine with what seems the obvious present expediency of concession, to lead the clergy now to take up exactly the attitude taken up by S. Basil. They would decide: 'Let there be nothing penal; above all, let there be no excommunication. There shall be no approval, but let the conduct of the parties be between themselves and God.' The Eastern Churches are the commentary on this attitude, which those who will, may find written broadly across the page of history. And they who read those lessons broadly will find a warning in them rather than an argument.

'To do a great right, do a little wrong,'<sup>1</sup>

is a weapon that returns to wound the hand of the man, or the judge, who uses it:—

'Twill be recorded for a precedent;  
And many an error, by the same example,  
Will rush into the State.'<sup>2</sup>

How many and how great those errors have been, people are apt to forget who point to the practice of the East as if it were to be our example. For controversial purposes the issue is limited to a single cause. But the appeal from Western practice to the East, if it proves anything, proves too much. The sole cause of adultery, and the sole case of the innocent partner, must be left far behind and out of sight if we are to plead the protection of a code which admits equally of divorce for

<sup>1</sup> *Merchant of Venice*, Act IV. sc. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

other and more trivial causes, and suffers horrible arrangements for getting rid of marriage bonds of which husband and wife are tired.

The truth is, that in the East, as in the West, the strict law of the Church is still the Apostolic canon. But in practice the Church has yielded to the pressure of the State, and has come to tolerate, and even to sanction, grievous departures from it which the State approves. Her voice, though not her heart, consents, lacking the resolute courage to say,

‘It cannot be.’<sup>1</sup>

On the whole, then, as we have seen, the Eastern Church showed signs of weakness, while the Western, less pressed upon by the State, has stood more firm. There have been plenty of evasions of one sort or another, in the West; but the Church, as a Church, has stood by the teachings of Holy Scripture. If there was wavering in two local Councils at Rome in the ninth century, which, on a possible interpretation,<sup>2</sup> permitted the re-marriage of the ‘innocent party,’ this departure from principle took no hold of the Church and was only temporary. The Western theologians were clear. For instance, S. Thomas Aquinas taught that the marriage bond was not dissolved by adultery, and that no re-marriage could be permitted. The Council of Trent stood firm on the subject, even though there were many inducements, from the circumstances of the time, to greater laxity. The Council of Florence had done so before, so that whatever evasions may have been countenanced by Roman authorities under the plea of ‘nullity’—*i.e.* that, whether

<sup>1</sup> *Merchant of Venice*, Act IV. sc. 1.

<sup>2</sup> But, against this interpretation, see Watkins, *Holy Matrimony*, p. 379.



in fact or fiction, the first marriage was no-marriage, and void from the beginning—the principle remains unaltered. In those cases where Rome has allowed re-marriage, she has allowed it, ostensibly at least, on the sole ground and supposition that the marriage impugned was invalid by reason of some bar or defect making the ceremony nugatory from the first, and placing the parties to it, without reference to their guilt or innocence, simply in the position of people who have tried to effect that which they were in point of fact incapable of effecting, and therefore did not effect.<sup>1</sup> With the validity of the first marriage, the question is closed. Both in practice and in principle the ‘mature and deliberate verdict’ of the Roman Church is distinct on indissolubility, as an essential characteristic of Christian Marriage.

As regards the Anglican Church, it may be said broadly that it has been faithful from first to last to the indissolubility of Christian marriage. It is usual to quote, as against this contention, the lax statement on the subject in the *Penitential* of Theodore of Tarsus; it has, however, been truly argued (1) that the authenticity of this document is by no means certain, though it is highly probable; and (2) that even if it be authentic, Theodore, with all his greatness, was infected, from his antecedents and education, with the lax views of the East: and that his unsoundness on the subject would only bring into greater prominence the faithfulness of the Church, because the Council of Hertford, which was ‘in fact the first Council of the English Church,’ decided strongly in favour of the indissolubility of the marriage

<sup>1</sup> Possibly there is one exception in the opinion of an individual Pope on a particular case of great difficulty: see Gregory II., *Ep. ii. ad Bonifacium Episc.*, 2.

bond, notwithstanding the opposing views of this great Archbishop who presided over it. In later times an effort was made to relax the teaching of the Church on the subject, under the influence of the foreign Protestant Reformers. The code of laws, however, which is known as the *Reformatio legum ecclesiasticarum* never became the law of the Church. The canons of 1603 uphold the Christian law, as opposed to re-marriage after separation;<sup>1</sup> and the canons for the Scottish Church of 1635 also forbid re-marriage, and these are specially interesting because they were drawn up by Archbishop Laud. He had, as is well known, in a moment of

<sup>1</sup> The unwillingness of the Church of England to interfere with, or to suspect, a marriage *prima facie* validly contracted appears from—

Canon 105. 'Forasmuch as matrimonial causes have been always reckoned and reputed among the weightiest, and therefore require the greater caution when they come to be handled and debated in judgment, *especially in causes wherein matrimony, having been in the Church duly solemnized, is required, upon any suggestion or pretext whatsoever, to be dissolved or annulled,*' the canon goes on to enjoin that '*in all proceedings to divorce, and nullities of matrimony,*' strict care shall be had to the sufficiency of the proof, 'and that credit be not given to the sole confession of the parties themselves, howsoever taken upon oath.'

The subsequent canon, which provides in the preamble that no sentence of divorce shall be given but in open court, divides these sentences into two classes in the enacting clauses, viz. (a) suits for separation and (b) suits of nullity.

Canon 106. 'No sentence shall be given *either for separation a thoro et mensa, or for annulling of pretended matrimony,* but in open court . . .'

But the largest measure of divorce, *i.e.* of separation in a marriage originally valid, as opposed to (b) *supra*, suit of nullity, known to the Church of England, is defined in the succeeding canon, and that in terms which call for complete quotation.

Canon 107. 'In all sentences *pronounced only for divorce and separation* a thoro et mensa, there shall be a caution and restraint inserted in the act of the said sentence, *That the parties so separated shall live*

weakness, married the Earl of Devonshire to a divorced lady. All his life long afterwards he looked upon this act as a grave sin, for which, to the last, he did penance;<sup>1</sup> and so, these Scottish canons have been aptly described as his ‘public recantation.’ The Church of England has been as firm and faithful in later years as in former. Her Prayer Book in *The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony* is quite decisive as to her teaching. It is impossible, with any real regard for the morality of language, to interpret this solemn form which her clergy are bound to use, as teaching anything but the indissolubility of the marriage bond.

(1) The Church there speaks of marriage as ‘an honourable estate’ and a ‘holy estate,’ showing thereby that it is no mere ‘contract,’ but, as we have seen, a ‘relation.’

(2) By saying ‘instituted of God in the time of man’s innocency,’ she shows that she holds the belief that our Lord reverted to the original institution, in which the notion of divorce was inadmissible. (3) In the words

‘signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt

*chastely and continently; neither shall they, during each other’s life, contract matrimony with any other person. And, for the better observation of this last clause, the said sentence of divorce shall not be pronounced until the party or parties requiring the same have given good and sufficient caution and security into the court, that they will not any way break or transgress the said restraint or prohibition.’*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. e.g. ‘My cross about the Earl of Devon’s marriage, Dec. 26, 1605. . . . I am become a scandal to Thy name, serving my own ambition, others’ sins. Others persuaded, but my own conscience loudly forbade me. Let not this marriage divorce my soul from Thy bosom. Ah! how much better had I suffered martyrdom with Thy protomartyr upon his commemoration day, than done the pleasure of too faithless, careless friends. . . . Even to this day, after so often repeated prayers, and sorrow and confusion of soul, again and again poured out before Thee, my sin weighs heavily’ (Mozley, *Essays*, vol. i., pp. 146, 147).



Christ and His Church,' she describes it as a union which can never be broken. (4) She teaches, 'that so many as are coupled together otherwise than God's Word doth allow are not joined together by God'; reminding us that it is only that union which is according to the Divine Institution, a union which does not admit of divorce by except death, which is considered by her marriage according to the law of God. (5) She reminds both the man and the woman that their engagement and duties to one another hold 'so long as' they 'both shall live.' (6) She requires each to promise to take the other, not only while things go well and duties are rightly fulfilled, but 'for better for worse,' teaching them that it is until death parts them, which is 'according to God's holy ordinance.' (7) She solemnly declares that those whom God hath joined together are not to be put asunder by man. Then further her *lex supplicandi*, *lex credendi*<sup>1</sup> even more solemnly, if possible, teaches the indissoluble character of marriage, by the character of the prayers which she offers for God's grace and assistance to those who are married, that they may live in that moral accord which is suited to such a holy and indissoluble union. There is something of special solemnity in teaching which is conveyed in words addressed to God Himself; and in this office the minister addresses the Almighty as Thou 'who,' 'knitting them together, didst teach that it should *never* be lawful to put asunder those whom Thou by matrimony hadst made one'; and again, as Thou 'who hast consecrated the state of matrimony to such an excellent mystery, that in it is signified and represented the spiritual marriage and

<sup>1</sup> 'Man's bede, man's creed.'

unity betwixt Christ and His Church.' If the Church of England contemplated marriage as anything else than a *relation*, implying an indissoluble bond, it would not be possible for her to use more misleading words; and further, it would be difficult to imagine greater levity in sacred things, or indeed profanity, than for any of her ministers to use such words in the—so called—marriage of those who had been, one or both, separated from husband or wife still living. In fact, the Church of England teaches with all possible clearness the indissolubility of the bond of marriage except by death. There have been various utterances, more or less clear and more or less confused, as to the law of the Church of England on the matter. There has been a certain amount of weakness shown in influential quarters, which is much to be regretted. But the Church of England has never, we may be thankful to remember, herself departed from her witness to that Scriptural tradition which has always been so strong in this country, as to the sacredness of the marriage bond. That bond, according to the teaching of our Church as it stands, is indissoluble, except by death. The selfishness and unrestrained desires of men have, of course, fought against this Divine restraint, as against so many others. Various special Acts of Parliament for granting divorces in particular cases have been passed from time to time, especially since the Restoration. In 1857 an Act was passed, which created a regular divorce court, and this has been in active operation ever since. Lord Campbell, who was one of the leading promoters of this unfortunate Act, expresses in his correspondence his horror at the results, even in the early days in which he wrote, of

what he had done. Since then those results have been increasingly disastrous. The moral tone of the country as regards the sanctity of marriage has been terribly lowered, and grave domestic scandals practically encouraged. Still, there are two hopeful signs in the matter: (1) There remains deep seated in the English mind a sense of the sanctity of marriage and the sacredness of home; and (2) although occasionally Anglican priests have not shown sufficient determination in refusing the use of their churches for the profanation of the Sacrament of Marriage; and although there have been found some even so unfaithful as to minister in this profane farce; and although some of the authorities of the Church have not forbidden the use of their names in granting licences for such things, still the Church of England as such has had no part or lot in encouraging such unhappy legislation, and the Act of 1857 can only be looked upon by instructed members of the Church of Christ as an Act for legalising adultery.<sup>1</sup>

The motives which have moved some more or less to condone the re-marriage—so called—of divorced persons have been very various.

(1) Some have contended that the marriage bond is *ipso facto* severed by the sin of adultery. A very little thought on the subject shows that this is entirely untenable. If a married person has committed sin, according to this supposition, and is forgiven and reconciled, then there ought to be another marriage, for the bond has been severed. If, again, there has

<sup>1</sup> It is well to remember that the very necessity for bringing in a *Divorce Act* is witness that divorce *a vinculo* was illegal in the Church of England, on any showing, up to 1857, and is so still to Churchmen.



been no reconciliation, and another 'marriage' has taken place, then supposing sin to be committed again, this new bond is severed; and in order that there may be 'marriage,' the person who has so sinned may be either reconciled, and then a new marriage ceremony must take place, or may 'marry' some one else, and so on *ad infinitum*. If this view is admitted, then every union in itself creates a marriage bond, and marriage becomes a name simply, given to any number of acts of sin.<sup>1</sup> According to this theory, it may not always be *called* marriage, because *that* might depend upon certain legal enactments; but nevertheless, if two persons consent in sin, then it would *be* marriage. It need hardly be said that such a view is obviously untenable, consistently with either social wellbeing or Divine revelation. Nevertheless, such a view has been put forward as justifying even Churchmen in seeming to approve the action of the divorce court.

(2) It has been argued that the 'guilty party' must not be 're-married' after divorce, for such re-marriage would be the sin of adultery, but that the 'innocent party' is free to be 're-married.' This view also is obviously untenable, and seems to arise out of a confusion of thought. Marriage 'implies a bond between two which binds both. If it be so severed that either is not bound, then both must be free. If it be so in force that either is bound, then both must be bound.' It is clearly impossible that, if marriage is a bond between two, it can exist at all unless both are bound by it; and that it cannot be severed at all, unless both are thereby made free. This notion

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Notes to sermon, 'Christ and Human Law,' Liddon, *University Sermons*, second series, sermon xvi.

probably arises from an obscure and confused feeling about justice, from which people seem to imagine that it is hardly fair to punish an innocent person, because his or her partner in married life has been guilty. To say nothing of the fact, however, that too often the so-called 'innocent party' is in many respects not 'innocent' at all in the matter, it still remains true that neither Church nor State has any right to exercise a discipline, or enforce a punishment upon the one who has been guilty of sin, which is inconsistent with the Divine institution of marriage. For what is really meant amounts to this:—We will not allow the 'guilty' persons to marry again, in order to punish them for their guilt; but we will allow the 'innocent' persons to do so, in order to reward them for their innocence. This is only another way of saying that there is no such thing as Holy Matrimony at all; that there is no 'holy estate'; that there is no 'relation' into which man and woman enter according to Divine conditions; that, in fact, marriage is merely a contract, about the conditions of which society—or the State as representing society—can determine. Whatever else this is consistent with, it is not consistent with the teaching of Christianity.

(3) Another, and probably a moving motive with many, arises from kindliness and sympathy with those whose lives and homes have been made unhappy. Every one who has any heart or any Christian feeling must feel deep sympathy for those who suffer, and especially those who suffer in the most intimate relations of life. But sympathy with sorrow and kindly feeling become dangerous weakness, when we are led by them to condone what is wrong, or to try

to cure a wound by inflicting a worse. If men and women enter on the estate of marriage, those who are responsible for teaching them show real kindness when they warn them that they are taking a very serious step, which brings great happiness to both if 'begun, continued, and ended' in the faith and fear of God and with the assistance of Divine Grace. Man and woman in marriage take each the other, not 'for better' only, but 'for better for worse.' We must feel great sorrow for the troubles of a home arising out of the drunkenness or thoughtlessness or extravagance of a husband or wife; we must feel very deep sympathy for one or other whose life is darkened by, say, the continued illness or insanity of the other: these are terrible trials, terrible afflictions, but a Christian does not seriously propose that in consequence the marriage should be dissolved, but, on the contrary, exhorts and tries to help the sufferer to seek and use God's grace to 'endure the chastisement.' In so deep and serious a matter as marriage, the wellbeing of society has to be considered as truly as the wellbeing of individuals; anything like a wide permission of divorce, such as is practically demanded in many quarters now, and such as is all too freely conceded even in England, and still more in America, cuts at the very root of a healthy society. Certainly it is contrary to Divine revelation; and whatever may be done by the State in any country, where there is, as now, an increasing tendency to laxity and limp morality, and reactionary paganism, the Christian Church is bound, even for the sake of those who do not much regard her authority, unflinchingly to bear her witness to indissolubility except by death, as an essential characteristic of Holy Marriage.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE QUESTION OF MARRIAGE WITH NEAR OF KIN

THE re-marriage of divorced persons, as we have seen, is entirely prohibited according to Christian teaching. In forbidding it, our Lord and His Church went back to the original Divine intention and institution. In the general decay of principle which followed upon the Fall, many things took place among mankind contrary to this; and in the same way, wherever divorce has asserted itself among Christians, there is really a return to heathenism.

In the same way, in marriages of near of kin, there has been in modern times a tendency to fall back upon heathen or unchristian practices. That marriages with near of kin would be necessary in the very beginning of the race is evident. We, however, have to do with laws and principles which come from the Divine Legislator for the guidance and government of the race as it is. Now it is certain that a special and most severe curse attached to such marriages according to the teaching of Revelation. The nation that permitted them was to be 'vomited out'; the individual who committed the sin was to be 'cut off.' God's prohibition of such marriages is even more strongly affirmed than

His prohibition of divorce. The sin of the Canaanites must have been a grave one indeed, seeing that their appointed punishment was so thoroughgoing and severe. Their sins were gross and carnal sins, and in the enumeration of them no less than fifteen are brought before us as cases of incestuous marriages. Heathens might be forgiven many things from their ignorance of Divine Revelation and of the Divine Will; but even the heathen were not free from punishment for these sins, which seem contrary to the natural law written in the heart. It was therefore to be expected that the law of the Christian Church on these matters would be stringent and distinct; and so it is. The mere fact that the Christian law must raise us higher than the best heathen morality, teaches us conclusively that Christianity at least forbids what were even treated as sins amongst heathens. 'The inquiry into the provisions of the Mosaic Code is thus no longer merely an inquiry into the history and development of certain laws and practices among the chosen people, but it is of immediate practical application. Prohibitions which were binding on the very heathen, and that under pain of annihilation, must be no less binding on ourselves.'

The question is treated of in the Mosaic Code very fully, but not exhaustively. The opening teaching is remarkable; it alludes to the Canaanites and the Egyptians, and so brings out the fact that the obligations laid down are universal. Then it enacts generally that there is inherent impurity in the marriage of near of kin: 'None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him.'<sup>1</sup> The breaches of such enactments then are represented as being breaches of Divine law.

<sup>1</sup> Lev. xviii. 6.

Then, again, in this code there follow a certain number of representative cases. *All* cases are not named, but a sufficient number are named to illustrate the Divine commands. Particular stress is laid upon cases which correspond to those of Abraham and Jacob, as there might be danger—unless it were so—of their example being imitated, as those who had acted in this way were great patriarchs. It is thus that marriage is forbidden with a half-sister; and forbidden with unusual emphasis, as that was the case of Abraham. It is thus also that the case of marriage with a wife's sister is expressly prohibited, as that was the case of Jacob; the prohibition guarding against this marriage during the wife's lifetime.

It has been commonly said, by those who have been favourers of laxity in such marriages, that the list given by Moses is exhaustive. Luther contended for this; and in modern times, when efforts have been made to permit marriage with a deceased wife's sister, the same has been urged, viz. that unless any particular case is mentioned with a prohibition, we must understand that it is sanctioned. It is evident that this argument will not hold, else the marriage of a woman with her father, her grandsons, and her uncles would be permitted by the law of God. This is obviously absurd. What we have, then, are a number of representative cases, and—from the whole teaching of the code—several *principles* which are to guide us and are to be applied to all cases, and a foundation principle from which these spring. The principle is that the husband and wife are 'one flesh.' This is strongly insisted upon, and in the plainest language, which need not be quoted, again and again. The breach of it calls out the remark, 'It is wickedness.'



The other principles which clearly follow from this, and are plainly illustrated in the Mosaic Code, are, that close blood relationship debar from marriage; and further, that close relationships of affinity also debar from marriage, as the close relations of the wife are held to be those of the husband, and *vice versa*, from the fact that the husband and wife are 'one flesh'; and again, that all relationship through the woman stands on the same footing as relationship through the man. If we carry out these principles, the result is a Table containing thirty relationships. This Table is, in fact, the law of the English Church. It was adopted in the 99th Canon,<sup>1</sup> and it is printed at the end of the Book of Common Prayer. 'This Table, which is the recognised Table of the English Church, is thus the Table of the Mosaic Code when the principles which that code necessarily involves are consistently applied. As the prohibitions of the Mosaic Code are held to be binding even upon the heathen, they must be regarded as of Divine, and not merely of human obligation. The English Table may be said to be the most complete statement of the Divine laws in the matter. The Eastern and Western Churches have many more prohibitions than the prohibitions of this Table, but they are not asserted to be of Divine obligation. On the other hand, the Mosaic Code expresses considerably fewer prohibitions, but the principles affirmed require that the prohibitions expressed shall be supplemented

<sup>1</sup> Canon 99 enjoins: 'No person shall marry within the degrees prohibited by the laws of God, and expressed in a Table set forth by authority in the year of our Lord God 1563. *And all marriages so made and contracted shall be judged incestuous and unlawful, and consequently shall be dissolved as void from the beginning, and the parties so married shall by course of law be separated.*'

by the additional prohibitions of the Table. In reaching this Table, we do in fact reach the complete statement of Divine law in the matter. Christianity has nothing to add to it, nor may it take ought away.'

It must also be pointed out that there are two further principles which help us to a right grasp of what the Divine law is in the matter. (1) Blood-relationship only disables from marriage where one of the parties is descended from the father or mother of the other, *e.g.* an uncle may not marry his niece because she is descended from his father, while first cousins may marry (even though such marriages may sometimes be imprudent), because neither of them is descended from the father or mother of the other. (2) As to affinity; it does not hinder the *relations* of a man from marrying the *relations* of his wife; *e.g.* two brothers may marry two sisters.

When the duty of following the Divine law as to the marriage of near of kin has been pressed upon Christians, they have sometimes been perplexed as to the case brought before our Lord of the rule that if a man's brother died, that man should take the brother's wife and 'raise up seed unto his brother.'

This law is known as the Levirate law. The name is said to come from the Latin word *levir*, a husband's brother. It did not originate with the Jews; it is found to have prevailed amongst Oriental tribes, and amongst the Greeks and Hindus, and to have come from very remote antiquity. It is said, with great probability, that the custom originated from the fear and anxiety felt among Eastern nations as to not handing down the name to future generations. The Jews doubtless adopted it from neighbouring nations, and it cannot be looked upon in the Mosaic legislation otherwise than

as a concession to human weakness. We know perfectly well that such concessions were made in times of ignorance. This one has been rightly compared to the concession with regard to slavery and divorce, and, it may be added, polygamy. It was really a heathen law, which was *permitted* among the chosen people. It has been very truly stated also that it was marked as being below the standard of the Divine law for the chosen people. The object of it was distinctly named as being one of an inferior kind, not for the union and companionship of two human beings, but ‘to raise up seed’; and if the child were born, the child was considered by the law to be not its own father’s child, but its uncle’s. There can be no doubt that the arrangement was altogether opposed to the spirit of Mosaic legislation; for in his exact teachings on the subject, the lawgiver lays it down, ‘Thou shalt not’ marry thy brother’s wife.<sup>1</sup> We know from Holy Scripture that Almighty God may see fit in certain circumstances to modify or limit the full reach of a law which He lays down. ‘Thou shalt not kill’ is a positive law. We know that in certain circumstances war is not only permitted but is a duty; and when Phinehas, in righteous anger and zeal for God, slew the two malefactors in the affair with Midian, his deed was approved by God, and the plague was stayed. So it might be in regard to union within the forbidden degrees; God, who made the law, might suspend the incestuous character of it; He had done so in the beginning of the race; and the legislator, while making all possible provisions for discouraging the practice, nevertheless admitted it, in the special and exceptional circumstances, as

<sup>1</sup> Lev. xviii. 16; xx. 21.



part of his concessive and temporary legislation. It will be seen, therefore, that no argument can be drawn from the Levirate law against the Divine rule taught by the Christian Church, as to marriage with near of kin.

Under the Mosaic dispensation, it is quite possible that marriage with the deceased wife's sister may have been similarly conceded, as some believe that it was, while it was entirely contrary to the spirit and principle—as we have seen—of that legislation. It must be remembered, however, if indeed this was the case, that it is well argued there were special reasons for such a concession. For instance, women were undoubtedly placed in an inferior position amongst the Israelites; and in the then unenlightened state of opinion, that fact had to be taken into account by any legislation that the people of Israel could accept. This idea was deepened by the occasional practice of polygamy. In a hundred ways this feeling was shown, and a feeling of the kind has hung about the Jewish people even in modern times. If Moses laid down the right principles of marriage and kinship, it was in some cases impossible to carry them out in fact. Because of hardness of heart, this sort of legislation had been allowed in the case of divorce, as our Lord pointed out, and so in these other cases Mosaic legislation for the same reason was led to make concessions to man's ignorance or weakness. Supposing that it is correct to say that the principle of kinship laid down by the Mosaic Code was only imperfectly carried out, and that marriage with the deceased wife's sister was permitted to the Jews, that affords no reason in modern times for Christians to violate the Divine law and the law of the Church on the subject. No one among Christians

would now pretend that polygamy could be permitted amongst them, because it was permitted amongst the early Jews. But besides that, the whole status of woman, and consequently the status of marriage, has been raised by Christianity. Woman was intended to be man's companion, not his slave, by the original Divine appointment. She was raised by Christianity, as we have already seen, to her proper and original place. That place was different from that of man, but not inferior to it, and consequently Christianity could never admit such relaxation as the Jews admitted upon the ground of the inferiority of woman.

There is no doubt that the Church returned to the true principle which we have seen ran through the Mosaic Code, and is of Divine appointment. The witness of Christendom is decided and definite. Mention is made as early as 305 A.D. at the Council of Elvira of the subject of marriage with a deceased wife's sister, and there the penalty affixed for a breach of what had evidently been understood to be the Christian law on the matter was excommunication for five years in ordinary cases. Again, punishment in the parallel case of the marriage of a deceased husband's brother is mentioned in the Eastern Council of Neo-Cæsarea about 314 A.D.; and the severe penalty imposed by the Council of Ancyra (314 A.D.) for the seduction of the sister of the woman to whom a man was betrothed and whom he afterwards married is very significant of the mind of the early Church. In the same direction was some of the Imperial legislation of Constantine. The strongest evidence, however, is to be found in the writings of S. Basil, which bear clear witness to the custom of the Christian Church. He writes as being

filled with horror at the notion of such a marriage, and he confidently appeals to the custom of the Church to bear him out. After the fourth century there is constant evidence from many provincial Councils of the same thing. And it appears to be true that this was 'never relaxed for at least fourteen centuries.' In the long history of the Church of England, 'there is nothing whatever to be found in any way favouring a relaxation of the ancient laws.' In 1563, the Church's view of the Divine law in the matter was thrown into the form of the Table of prohibited degrees: this Table is adopted in the 99th Canon of the Canons of 1603.<sup>1</sup> It is not really a part of the Book of Common Prayer; but for convenience of reference, it has long been appended to that Book, by whatever authority. It was drawn up by Archbishop Parker, and 'it cannot be denied that all subsequent legal decisions arising out of disputed degrees have been based upon the principles of interpretation laid down by Parker, and found to be in unison with those which had been accepted by the Catholic Church in early days as in accordance with the law of God.'<sup>2</sup>

As a consequence of laxer notions and greater carelessness as to the authority of the Church, there has been, in more recent times, a recurring agitation to permit marriage with a deceased wife's sister. Those who have been in favour of this relaxation have pretended that that marriage was only forbidden by Lord Lyndhurst's Act, as late as 1835. This is a complete mistake. That Act was passed merely to remedy certain defects, and to clear up certain doubts in the marriage laws. Lord Campbell, who was, as

<sup>1</sup> See p. 123, note.

<sup>2</sup> Luckock, *Hist. of Marriage*, pp. 309, 326, 331.



we know, no rigorist on the question of the marriage laws, says that people had used the provisions of the Bill to 'spread a false belief that, till Lord Lyndhurst's Act, a marriage with a deceased wife's sister was perfectly legal; whereas,' he goes on, 'it always was, and I hope ever will be, deemed incestuous, and the only defect to be remedied was the imperfect procedure for declaring its illegality.'<sup>1</sup>

The important practical question in our own time is narrowed to that of marriage with a deceased wife's sister. There have been other violations of the law of kinship in Germany and elsewhere, but not in England. At present all turns upon this one particular case. Doubtless, if this violation were permitted—considering what fallen man is—others would follow; for if it were permitted, the principle upon which our whole law as to marriage of affinities rests would be destroyed. The final argument against this permission in the mind of any believing Churchman is, of course, that it would be a violation of the law of God. We have already seen that the fundamental principle laid down by God, that a man and his wife are 'one flesh,' bans such marriages. We have further seen that we have no right to argue in their favour from the fact that this particular case is omitted in the list in Leviticus, because that argument would prove too much; for it would be favourable to the contracting of marriages which are admitted on all hands to be forbidden. We have seen also that such marriages as these were among the abominations for which the Canaanites—who knew nothing of the law of Moses—were so severely punished. The Catholic Church has

<sup>1</sup> *Lives of Chancellors*, viii. 101.

felt, then, that such a marriage is contrary to the law of God, and that, of course, settles the question for a believing Churchman. There may be, no doubt, for a government which has to legislate for large numbers of people who are not Churchmen, nor indeed, very often, Christians, a difficulty in the matter; but the Church in this country must demand and insist that whatever laws be made for unbelievers, she herself be not compromised by them. Just as she must insist that neither her clergy nor her churches shall have anything to do with the so-called marriages of divorced persons, so she must insist that they have nothing to do with such incestuous unions, if unhappily the government of the country were ever to legalise them. And meantime, Churchmen are bound to exert themselves to the utmost to prevent such legalisation, lest our country fall under the curse of Canaan.

Great efforts, as we know, have been made to obtain parliamentary authority for these unhallowed unions. Worldly men have sneered at the notion of attaching any importance to Biblical authority on the matter; but they have argued that it is a social convenience, that it is natural that the wife's sister, after the wife's death, should be the caretaker of her children. This argument would imply that for the sake of the children a widower is bound to 'marry' his sister-in-law. As a matter of fact, if this law prevailed, and if the widower did not wish to 'marry' his sister-in-law, the children would be deprived of the care of their aunt; for the aunt could not longer live in her brother-in-law's house when the law had placed her in the same relation to him as that of any other woman. Besides, the argument is not an honest one; for there have

been cases in which a widower has lived in incestuous union with his sister-in-law, when there were no children to be thought of in the matter, or when, if there were any, they had so far grown up as not to require a mother's care. If the law were ever to be passed—which God forbid!—it would be a social hardship; it would deprive a man of a sister; and it cannot be pretended that it is a hardship to restrict a man in the choice of his second wife, to choosing her anywhere in the world except out of two families, viz. his own and his first wife's. There has also been a pretence made that the effort to change the law in a sense contrary to the Table of the 99th Canon has been made in the interests of the poor. This is mere pretence. Rich men, or well-to-do men, have chosen to violate the law, and so have struggled to have it altered. In the case of the poor, when people have sinned in this way, their poor neighbours for the most part have been extremely shocked. There is no doubt that the mere agitation of the question has done a great deal of harm. Fallen man is not fond of being restrained in carrying out his desires; and the mere proposal to defy the law of God and the law of the Church in this matter has only increased the already too advanced laxity of the time. We ought clearly to keep before us that the whole of the undivided Church has been quite decided on this matter. 'It has considered the Levitical prohibitions as binding upon Christians, except so far as they are dispensed with by a sufficient (*i.e.* a Divine) authority; and it has considered the wife's sister as coming within those prohibitions.' It ought to be remembered also that the New Testament seems to teach this more fully than a cursory reader would at



first suppose. On this subject 'there is no small reason to believe that the Levitical restrictions were in a manner re-enacted, and proclaimed as binding upon all Christians, in that first Council of Jerusalem, when "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to the Apostles to lay upon" the Gentile converts, whom they were exempting generally from the positive part of the Mosaic Law, the burden of abstaining (among other things) from "fornication."<sup>1</sup> There is high authority for believing that "fornication" in this place means marriage within the Levitical degrees. Till that is disproved, or some decree produced of equal authority, annulling this Canon of the Apostles, had we not better keep our law as it is?'

'It has before been noticed,' the writer already quoted goes on, 'that S. Paul called it by this same title, "fornication," only of a singularly heinous kind, when a man had married his stepmother.'<sup>2</sup> This confirms the explanation given of the same word in Acts xv.; and it is also proof, if any were wanted, how sacred in God's sight are the near degrees of affinity. Transgressions against them are sometimes made light of in comparison because people do not seem to themselves to feel the same natural horror of them as when there is blood-relationship. As if on purpose to caution us on this head, the only two cases of unlawful unions specified in the New Testament are sins against affinity, not consanguinity—the case of Herod<sup>3</sup> and that of the incestuous Corinthian.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Acts xv. 28, 29.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. v. 1.

<sup>3</sup> S. Mark vi. 17, 18.

<sup>4</sup> The marriage of Herod with Herodias was unlawful for several reasons, and the sin against affinity is that specially mentioned. The father of the incestuous Corinthian may have been alive (see 2 Cor. vii. 12). Whether he was or not, special stress is laid on the sin against affinity.

There are then overwhelming arguments against any tampering with the Church's law as to marriages with near of kin. We must never forget what stress is laid upon this question both in Holy Scripture and in the Church at all times; and that as Holy Marriage is at the very root of civilised society, to tamper with it in any way is to give society a dangerous shock, and to imperil the very foundations of our civilisation.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE MORAL OBLIGATIONS OF MARRIAGE

THE moral question, as we have before seen, is the important question. Ethics comprehend the science of character and conduct, and anything which touches life so deeply and at so many points as marriage must necessarily involve ethical considerations in a pre-eminent degree.

Mankind, as a whole, may be distinguished from the rest of creation as being specially affected by such considerations. It is true that, looking out on the world as we see it, we are led to believe that all the phenomena before us imply a cause behind them. That cause, we further see at once, must possess power and thought. There is evidence to every one who opens his mind to it of the existence of an intellectual Being as the First Cause or Framers of the wonderful order which is before us in created nature. It has been truly enough argued that if we stop there, there is no moral question involved. Even there, however, we should discover that certain courses of action in the creature are preferred by the Creator, because some involve pain, whilst others bring pleasure; and we can discover that some, while bringing temporary pleasure,



involve grave and lasting loss. We should learn from this, of course, that it is wise to fall in with these evident preferences of the Creator of the world, and that it is imprudent not to fall in with them. We should learn that to depart from what appeared to be the regulation of some one stronger than ourselves, is not to consult our own interests, but that would be all. It has been truly said that we might have a sense of *imprudence*, but no sense of *guilt*; because as the reason of the command, whatever it might be, has no sort of ground in our own natures, it would be felt to be arbitrary and simply imposed upon us. So any religion which only teaches belief in God's power and in His method of establishing and administering general laws, can never involve anything ethical, or teach us anything at all about duty. We become conscious of right and wrong only when a positive order from without finds an echo in a command within the soul itself.

Such, however, is not the state of things of which we have experience in this world. From the very first, we are conscious that the moral value of things forms their real value. 'Childhood itself, small as are its concerns, is full of its moral enthusiasms and indignations, quick with its shame and compunction, bright with its self-approval; and with all its heedlessness, betrays every day the inner working and the eager growth of conscience.' So much is this the case, that all really important teaching must depend for its true effect upon finding such a power in the soul, ready to recognise its truth and indorse its teaching; and men are not uncommonly found who seem to have no grasp of supernatural truth, and who perhaps have never had

any real teaching as to revealed religion, who have yet a very acute moral sense and a very deep conscientiousness. They seem to bow before an authority which they do not explicitly and in so many words acknowledge. There are men of this kind who would, if they thought of the matter, attribute it all to their own nature, and to what they know and feel of their relations with others. No matter to what they attribute it, they witness to the fact of the great distinction between right and wrong being at the very root of our nature. They have an idea of the value of what *ought* to be, as distinct from what *is*. This, again, is remarkable, and brings forcibly before us the supreme value of the moral side of things. It has been truly said: 'If this *ought* is a fact, it is a very curious one: it is not, like other facts, *in time*; it is no phenomenon, past or present; it has never been seen, or otherwise perceived; it is predicable of no actual existence; it is no objective property, nor is there any nameable category of empirical reality under which it can be brought. It can be affirmed of nothing that comes as a link in the chain of necessary sequence; but only of a possibility where more than one is present. It refers therefore only to the future and uncreated, that is still determinable by some freewill. It is not the agent's foresight of what will be, nor is it anything of his own making, which he can unmake or alter. Nor is it *information*, passing from the knowing to the ignorant; it is *commandment*, speaking in the imperative, and instantly owned as a perfect word, coming whence sovereign tones have a right to flow. Hence there is no sincere power to challenge that peremptory voice: the whole personality secretly kneels before it. Here, then, is revealed not

simply the thought of one mind, but the *relation between two*; both, the seat of the same conscious moral order; the one, its infinite archetype; the other, the finite image, made susceptible of appeal and of response.'

S. Paul speaks of this when he touches upon the responsibility of the uninstructed heathen. This moral sense becomes, of course, brilliantly illuminated, and more and more clearly instructed by Divine revelation. It is that revelation which helps us clearly to understand and see and consciously feel the presence of *that other* besides ourselves in this relation. We felt that we *ought* to do certain things, and *ought not* to do certain other things; now we know that the *ought* means that we owe it to God. As we are fallen creatures, there are terrible contradictions felt by ourselves within us. We are drawn and attracted towards God, and yet we are constantly inclined to resist the attraction. Other forces seem to hold us, and we are made, or half-made, their slaves. We are 'tied and bound by the chain of our sins,' yet whilst we hear the true voice and long for freedom, still too often we hug our chains. We have in our souls the high ideal of Goodness and Truth, and yet from the pressure of corrupt desire we fight against it. S. Paul, as we know, speaks of this in words which find their echo in every heart: 'I am carnal, sold under sin'; 'for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.' 'I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.' 'I delight in the law of God after the



inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?'<sup>1</sup> And it has been well said—

‘There is a noble slave within thee to whom  
Thou owest his freedom.’<sup>2</sup>

The fact is, then, that in all things the moral question is the highest question; that fallen human nature is well aware of this, and feels its weakness in trying to escape from the slavery of evil. Conscience may remain and may speak, and yet may be disregarded. It is indeed a tie between God and His creatures which is often preserved in some degree when everything else is lost. Physical pain has often been surpassed by the torments of conscience, and though it, itself, has been not unaffected by the corruption and misery of the Fall; although it, itself, has sometimes gone astray; although its authority has been set aside by the overwhelming force of unregulated desire; yet there have been witnesses to its existence and power, even in the most corrupt conditions of heathenism; and the great poets and tragedians of Greece, as well as the satirists of Rome—amidst all the corruptions of their times—bear their witness to its serious reality.

Now every human relation must be surrounded by its appropriate moral atmosphere. The most important question which it suggests must be the question of the moral obligations involved in it: accordingly marriage—the deepest and most serious of human relations—is

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vii. 14, 15, 18, 19, 22-24.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Luthardt, *Moral Truths of Christianity*, p. 52.

so surrounded, and involves special obligations. Some of the most important of these may well be considered ; for the many sins and mistakes made with regard to marriage, either by public legislation or by private conduct, constantly arise from want of consideration of, or disregard to, these moral obligations.

(1) The first important obligation in married life is *mutual affection*. This is the very foundation of all others. What is needed above all things is a union of hearts. Marriage in its essence is, as we know, a very intimate union of two personal lives. It is to degrade it, to consider it only on its physical side. Man is not only body, or soul, or spirit ; he is the union in one person of all these, and marriage is meant to be a complete union. The mutual affection which leads to marriage may be in different degrees of course. The most beautiful of all is that early love, which only deepens and grows more exalted as life goes on. There are, however, good and holy marriages made in later life, in which affection is no longer passionate and enthusiastic perhaps, but rather deeply respectful. All real affection is respectful ; but marriages are made sometimes, and very excellent marriages too, between those in whom the enthusiastic devotion of early life has passed away. There may be also very excellent reasons besides for certain marriages. A man may need a companion, or a woman may need a home, and a support and stay, and these may be excellent reasons for marriage, but only excellent if there is at least that mutual affection which grows out of mutual respect and trust. A marriage of convenience, *i.e.* a marriage made solely for money or position, in which there is disgust or loathing, or dislike, or even absence of respect

and affection on either side, must be wrong, and cannot expect the Divine blessing. Mutual affection, then, is a moral obligation for entering upon the married state, not necessarily, as we have seen, enthusiastic and romantic and ideal love, but at least a true confidence and respect. Of course, such an affection as merely simulates tenderness and politeness is no affection at all of the kind we mean. It must imply a real and deep interest of one in the other, and such an affection as can willingly, and indeed without dwelling upon them, make allowances for faults which must appear in every human character, and which expresses itself in that true tenderness, that leads one to help the other in every way possible in the needs or troubles or anxieties of life; which leads them, in fact, in the most complete degree to 'bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.' Love, as we know, in its true sense is a deep and unselfish thing, for it is Divine; it may have the most beautiful manifestations in early enthusiasms, and some of those exquisite and tender romances which have made the poetry of mankind. It is never, none the less, deep and real, unless it involves in itself—at least implicitly—a sense of moral obligation. God is love, because God is absolute perfection, utter goodness, and entire unselfishness; and that love which God gives to His creatures when He appoints that man and woman should be united must be, as it may be, like—at whatever immense distance—His own. Two faults may be committed in this respect; on the one hand, young people may expect to find in the proposed partner for married life an absorbing affection to an exaggerated extent; on the other hand, the world may look cynically at marriage as practically a mere



convenient contract or arrangement, which need not have a very high ideal, and can at best be expected only to work just well enough. The true corrective to such mistakes is a deeper sense of moral obligation, of the duty that is owed in this special gift of one's heart and affections to another—owed not merely to that other, but to God. Thus at any rate it should be in anything professing itself Christian marriage.

(2) And such an affection should be *firm and lasting*, certainly as lasting as that mysterious bond to which it leads.

Dante says that Love is that mysterious possession of which the more we give, the more we have to give. This is true, not only because one love of one degree in no way hinders other loves each in their own degree, but it is also true in this way that a real love tends to deepen and become more complete. The ideal is that the true affection which leads to marriage should be as true, and ever deeper, as years go on. To this it is constantly objected that we 'cannot help' ourselves in the matter of affection. People are apt to look upon themselves in some sense as machines, worked, so to speak, by Fate; that if they love, they love, and they cannot choose but love; and that if love diminishes in course of time, again they are the victims of Fate. This is a common fallacy, and the hollowness of it may best be seen by comparing it with that other fallacy, that we cannot rule our beliefs, and are driven by Fate, and are not responsible for the workings of our minds. As to this fallacy, 'I can hardly imagine,' says a great teacher, 'any thinking man, who holds himself responsible for anything, seriously accepting the shallow phrase which sometimes meets us, that we are not

responsible for what we think and believe and hold; as if, supposing a man to think at all, he cannot help what his thinking leads him to believe; as if our thoughts and our belief were the mechanical, necessary, blind result of certain argumentative processes, which once set going produce their inevitable conclusions, as the printing machine gives off the impressions of the types with which it is charged. The living mind does not so act. No one, I think, who honestly reviews his own history, and examines into the foundation of his own principles of life, can doubt that he has had, at least, a great deal to do with setting up the types. The way and direction we choose to look makes a great difference in what we see and what we do not see. We may be attentive or inattentive to what passes before us as it passes before others: we may welcome thoughts or escape from them; impressions which we cannot help receiving we may cherish and deepen, or we may leave to be effaced: we may live in an atmosphere where one class of ideas, one class of assumptions and maxims, are perpetually at hand, or are perpetually away: the books we read, the trains of thought we follow, the authorities which we habitually defer to, with all their subtle, insensible, indefinable hold on us, are very much matters of our choice. If we think in one way rather than another, we have most of us done a good deal to put ourselves in the way of so thinking. If arguments come home to us with irresistible force, we have had ourselves something to do with preparing our souls, preparing the whole man, mind and heart and conscience, to be alive to their cogency. True, there are the bands and fashioning mould of circumstances, the discipline of education,

the influences, sweet or sad, anyhow deep, of home ways and of a mother's code of right and wrong. I quite recognise the overmastering force of facts and reason, often against the most adverse powers, often with most unexpected triumph over the dead weight of custom and prejudice, the living antagonism of passion and interest. I do not forget how in the presence of some great idea, which takes possession of a time or a people, all individual intellect is dwarfed and bows down, and is carried away by an overpowering impulse which at the moment it cannot fathom, and which at once animates, exalts, and controls it. Yet, on the whole, the government of our own minds is in our own hands. That great instrument of reason given to us, we can play on it much as we will, well or ill, wisely or foolishly; and the result is the complex fabric of habitual thought, opinion, conviction, faith, on which we have to live. Who can reasonably say that for this we are not responsible? <sup>1</sup>

Now these wise words, to a very great extent, apply to the affections. We divide in thought our spiritual constitution into intellect, affection, and will; but as a matter of fact we are one, and the affections have a great deal to do with the thoughts, and these with the will. If there is that drawing together of souls with respect and affection, which is the true way leading to the marriage bond, the preservation of that love, so that it be not only sincere, but also lasting and deepening, depends to a very great extent upon ourselves and how we deliberately put away to the utmost of our power all things that tend to weaken or disturb such affection.

<sup>1</sup> Church, *Human Life and its Conditions*, pp. 67-69.



Again, it is pleaded that such affection—constant and deepening—is all very well to talk of, and may occasionally be found, but that to expect it is too much to expect from frail humanity; that it is putting before us a practically impossible ideal. This view commends itself too easily to an age like ours, so much in love with pleasure, and so much the victim of a limp morality. There are fashionable writers who do not hesitate to indoctrinate their readers with the view that one man and one woman cannot expect always to be content with one another; that it is contrary to ordinary and necessary weaknesses and changing moods of frail human nature. Such an idea is encouraged too much by the reactionary paganism of our time, and the sinful legislation which has established the modern divorce court and shaken to its foundation the stout vigour of English morality. Nevertheless, such notions are not true. We are not puppets driven about anywhere without wills of our own, by the tyrannical efforts of passing moods or desires; and for this reason, what we are considering, and what, in our age, we are concerned with, is not a mere marriage-contract; it is Holy Marriage. Within the Christian Church, since the Incarnation of our Blessed Lord, powers which enable frail humanity to achieve that which otherwise could not be achieved, are placed at our disposal. If we will to use those powers, God gives us grace to fulfil this moral obligation of the married state, so that sincere affection becomes lasting love.

(3) Then also there is what may be called the moral obligation of *true companionship*. Doubtless too often there are instances in marriage, where the husband becomes despotic or the wife wilful: true companionship

is a moral duty, and it implies, at least, the restraint of mere selfishness. Man and woman each share the same human nature, but that human nature is exhibited in each only partially. Each needs the other. Say what men may, there is not only a difference between them of a physical kind, but there is real mental and spiritual divergence. A thoughtful writer has said: 'There are few more curious subjects of inquiry than the distinctive differences between the minds and characters of men and women, and the manner in which those differences have affected the ideal types of different ages, nations, philosophies, and religions. Physically, men have the indisputable superiority in strength, and women in beauty. Intellectually, a certain inferiority of the female sex can hardly be denied. . . . It is as impossible to find a female Raphael, or a female Handel, as a female Shakespeare or a Newton. Women are intellectually more desultory and volatile than men; they are more occupied with particular instances than with general principles; they judge rather by intuitive perceptions than by deliberate reasoning or past experience. They are, however, usually superior to men in nimbleness and rapidity of thought and in the gift of tact, or the power of seizing speedily and faithfully the finer inflexions of feeling, and they have therefore often attained very great eminence as conversationalists, as letter-writers, as actresses, and as novelists. Morally, the general superiority of women over men is, I think, unquestionable. . . . Self-sacrifice . . . is certainly far less common among men than among women, whose whole lives are usually spent in yielding to the will and consulting the pleasures of another. . . . Men lean most to justice and women to mercy. Men excel in energy, self-reliance, perseverance, and magnanimity; women in

humility, gentleness, modesty, and endurance. . . . Their imaginations individualise more; their affections are, in consequence, concentrated rather on leaders than on causes; and if they care for a great cause, it is generally because it is represented by a great man, or connected with some one whom they love. . . . In benevolence, they excel in charity which alleviates individual suffering rather than in philanthropy, which deals with large masses, and is more frequently employed in preventing than in allaying calamity.’<sup>1</sup>

Whether we accept all these details as accurate or not, we must feel that on the whole there is a great deal of truth in the statement, and it illustrates the fact before us. We cannot doubt that there are considerable differences between man and woman, and that these differences are the grounds of the inexhaustible delight felt by each, when there is a true affection between them, in understanding each other’s nature. If the woman feels a joy in surrendering her mind and thoughts in many particulars to the man, the man finds constant interest in studying the depths of her nature, so like yet so unlike his own. ‘Each finds that a new world dawns upon him (or her) in the other.’

Now, where marriage is rightly entered upon, there is felt the moral obligation, as well as the charm, of the cultivation of real companionship arising from these facts.

(4) And another and profound moral obligation, implied, indeed, in all we have said, is that of *faithfulness*. The faithfulness of married life ought to be, and may be, the most perfect exhibition of faithfulness in the world. If the reason of the thing did not teach

<sup>1</sup> Lecky, *History of European Morals*, ii. 379-382.



us this, Christians would learn it from the Apostolic revelation as to the mystery of marriage representing the mysterious union of Christ with His Church. Without faithfulness indeed in some degree, it would be impossible for society to hold together: the fundamental necessities of the wellbeing of human creatures imply the need of some trust in one another. In political life, in commercial life, in social life, faithfulness cannot be dispensed with if there is to be a healthy state of things. It is the very bond of friendship; it lies at the heart of human affection in all its degrees. Evidently its absolute importance in the married state cannot possibly be exaggerated. If two persons are so joined together that there is a deep, the deepest conceivable union; if this life is so important; if our waiting time here is the opportunity for forming our characters for a future and eternal existence; if we all influence each other to some extent, and so if each of us has a hand in forming the character of others—to what a height of importance married relationship is raised. Anything approaching to hollowness or untruth is a very grave sin against such a relationship; faithfulness in this is the most binding duty. It is obvious, of course, that any unfaithfulness in that part of married relation which affects the birth and lives of others is a sin of the greatest gravity. From our obligations to society, as well as from the deep mystery of human nature and human life, this is obvious. Faithfulness, however, goes deeper than that. Holy Scripture is always dwelling upon it, as one of the most important characteristics of a servant of God. And in such an instance as that of the character of Jacob, we cannot but feel

that in a very imperfect condition both of religion and civilisation, one who was full of grave faults and committed some serious sins really redeems his character by the tenacity of his faithfulness to his religious sense, and by his striking faithfulness to his early love. One of the most touching incidents, perhaps, recorded in those early and simple pastoral books of Holy Scripture, is the way in which the old man breaks off in his narrative, towards the close of his days, to exclaim, 'And as for me . . . Rachel died by me . . . in the way . . . and I buried her there.'<sup>1</sup> The faithful affection for the girl he had loved so early in life, about whom he had been so deceived, and for whom he had worked so hard, is still as fresh as ever in his closing hours, and his faithfulness to it passes on in his devoted affection to her sons.

We cannot doubt, then, that in entering on the married state, both man and woman have to endeavour to realise that faithfulness in all parts of this relation, in thought and word as well as in other things, is of moral obligation. If this were more realised, and if the first inclination towards the slightest unfaithfulness, even in thought, were checked at once as an absolute duty, there would, we cannot doubt, be fewer unhappy marriages.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xlviii. 7.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE CONSEQUENT DUTIES OF MARRIAGE

#### I. TONE OF LIFE

EVERY sincere and thoughtful view of life implies that we take into account the various conditions under which we may probably be placed. Marriage is a thing so deep and so important, that those conditions have especially to be anticipated and prepared for as far as possible. Marriage, viewed religiously, is a vocation; and in entering upon the exercise of any vocation, much more of so serious a vocation as this, certain, and even probable, duties must be thought of. If indeed a lax morality be accepted, and the great sin of divorce be treated lightly, or even encouraged, as it often now seems to be, the consequent duties of marriage will, of course, be as lightly set aside as the solemn calling itself. This, however, is not to act religiously, and such a frame of mind and temper is so wholly alien from the Christian Faith that it must be put aside at once when we treat of Holy Matrimony.

(1) The first duty which arises out of the entering into the marriage state is, of course, the duty owed by each to the other of trying to maintain the proper *ethos* of married life, and making 'the mutual society,



help, and comfort,' which, as we have seen, is one of the objects of marriage, thoroughly real and far-reaching. Of this, however, we have already taken account in speaking of the direct moral obligations of marriage; and it is only necessary to add to what has already been said, that in this is implied a voluntary and deliberate sharing of responsibilities in all matters of life where it is possible, and an entering upon new duties with a willing mind as things faithfully to be done in a thoroughly religious temper. Indeed, it is in this way that marriage becomes a true power for developing the character of each in a right direction; and this plainly involves a course of action in regard to the innumerable and changeful details of life, which depends upon a sound heart guided by Divine grace.

(2) But there are important consequent duties, either probably or certainly arising out of marriage, which require more detailed consideration. This is so, both because they take much of their seriousness from the seriousness of marriage, and also because, conversely, the importance of marriage is greatly enhanced by them. One point to be considered in this connection is of course of very grave importance. The Church recognises with great distinctness that one chief object of marriage is that children may be born into the world. It is impossible, therefore, to consider marriage in its full bearing on consequent duties without remembering the relation of parents and children. To be a parent is, of course, to exercise a great privilege, for the privilege of being the means of giving life to a human being is one of a very high order. The Christian religion teaches us what was much lost sight of in heathenism, the duty of parents to children,

and of children to parents. Christianity lays especial stress upon the sacredness of childhood. Our Lord Himself was once a little Child, and Christians have always loved to think of Him as such. The feelings and memories which circle round Christians and connect themselves with the thought of Bethlehem are amongst the most tender in the Christian religion, and have always appealed with special power to the English nature. Christ also showed a great love for children, as well as showing His sympathy with the marriage bond, from which comes the possibility of childhood in its most sacred aspect, by His presence and first miracle at the marriage of Cana in Galilee. He also chose the trustfulness and confidingness of childhood as the representative of that state of mind which ought to exist between ourselves and God. The Church of Christ has rightly determined—relying on constant tradition and on the evident meaning of Holy Scripture—that the soul of the child, even before the full development of conscious reason, can be the recipient of God's free grace, and that the child is rightly admitted into the unity of the Church by the Sacrament of Baptism. In all this, Christianity differs essentially from heathenism. While the heathen parent was supposed to have an absolute right over his child, the Christian parent learns that one of the most serious consequences of his union with his wife is the birth of a child over which he has not an absolute right, but towards which he has grave responsibilities. His child is a personal life on whom God has the first claim, and the parent has to act for God, and in the fear of God, towards the child.

Some of the obvious duties, therefore, of parents are

that they are bound to have care for their children and to protect them and maintain them in the early years when they are especially dependent upon others. But it is not care only, but also guidance, that is needed as a parent's duty. We all learn by the experience of life, as well as by the instructions we have in our early years; and though the experience of one can never be quite assimilated by another, and although there are lessons that we ourselves only can learn, still it is a parent's duty to place at the disposal of his child, so far as may be, the lessons he has himself learnt from experience. We are born into a very awful world, with great opportunities, great blessings, great trials; and the course of life is not an easy course, and in it the child has a right to expect guidance from the parent. Hence it comes that from the very nature of the case grows the duty of exercising authority towards the children of a Christian home. A thoughtful writer has said:—

‘As soon as I recognise an Author of my existence, I recognise an authority over me. I do not mean, of course, that I know anything about the words author, or authority; that I understand what binds them together. But I mean that in the very fact of fatherhood, authority is involved, that I learn what it is through my filial relation. . . . I have dominion, say over a certain number of acres. There are on those acres dead stock and live stock; ploughs; cattle that are yoked to the ploughs, men that drive the cattle. All these are included in my dominion. Whilst I look upon them only as in my dominion, I make no distinction between them. Dead stock, live stock, animals, men, they are all regarded as belonging to



me, instruments for tilling my land. I begin to see a difference between them. I recognise a bond between me and the men who drive the animals. I do not cease to give them orders; but the orders are those of one who has authority, not only of one who has dominion. I may discover that the animals also yield to words rather than to force; that a certain authority can be exercised over them. I become *humane* to them. I cease to be a brute possessing brutes; I am a man directing them. I cannot refer either this sense of fellowship with man, or this humane rule over animals, to my separate nature. Yielding to that, I shall merely try to assert dominion; whether I succeed or fail, it will be a battle of physical forces. But I am related to a father, he is related to me. I cannot destroy that relation though I try. It brings forth a manner in me. If the separate nature prevails over this relation, there will in all cases be dominion, but no authority; subjection, no obedience; brutality, no manners.’<sup>1</sup>

As a matter of fact, then, out of marriage, when it is blessed with children, there comes forth the true idea of authority and the duty of its right exercise.

And consequent upon this, there arises in the child—*i.e.* in human nature in its earliest years—a sense of dependence, not servile or cringing, but filled with love and respect. There arises consequently a sense of trust and faithfulness which is itself an education for the wider claims of after life. There is learnt, above all, the sense of obedience, which is always ennobling when rightly exercised towards those who have a right to demand it.

<sup>1</sup> Maurice, *Social Morality*, pp. 26, 27.

It is thus that out of Holy Marriage, in proportion as it is rightly entered into and rightly used, there follow consequent duties which tell upon the formation of character, and therefore upon the whole conduct of human affairs. It is by the fulfilment of such duties that habits are formed; and from these there comes a general atmosphere or temper, or *ethos*—as the Greeks would call it—which is one of the most important things in life. The *ethos* which prevails in a Christian home, formed by Holy Marriage, is one of the best and highest influences that can be known to man. A duty consequent upon marriage is the formation of that *ethos*. It is a right family feeling, that *pietas* or piety of which the Romans themselves were so conscious as being a power for goodness; that creation of a true tradition of reverence and mutual respect and love so intensely deepened by Christianity. It gives birth to custom; and ‘custom,’ it has been truly said, ‘is the deposit of the past in the life of the present.’<sup>1</sup> And custom, in the family life especially, has often a moral importance. It is a revolutionary spirit which breaks continuity; a true spirit of piety maintains the better traditions of family life. Continuity is a thing of importance in national history, and almost all-important in the history of a national Church; so it is important in family life. The *ethos* of the family is made healthy by the continuity of family ways and traditions, perpetually modified, or purified, or ennobled by new contributions from individual characters in the family, when children have been brought up with a sense of religion and reverence. A marriage which rises at all towards the ideal of Holy Matrimony will create this

<sup>1</sup> Luthardt, *Moral Truths of Christianity*, pp. 136, 137.

right *ethos* in the family, and that true atmosphere will sweeten all the individual lives of children and have its effect upon them in after days. ‘*When* precisely,’ it has been said with much force, ‘a child becomes a man or a woman, it can no more be said than when it should first stand on its legs. But a time assuredly comes when it should. . . . It may be—and happy the house in which it is so—that the father’s at least equal intellect and older experience may remain to the end of his life a law to his children, not of force, but of perfect guidance, with perfect love.’<sup>1</sup> In other words, if the real spirit of true marriage is carried out, and the consequent duties of parents to children, a bond is formed between them that is really never broken, and a healthy atmosphere of love and trust, of reverence and tenderness, is created, which must affect for good every individual soul.

(3) And then, of course, there are consequent duties which touch society. The social position of married life, ordinarily speaking, reaches out to society more than unmarried life, and touches it at many more points. Social duties become, therefore, more complex and more exacting. A married woman among any civilised and Christian people has a specially independent and commanding position. Far from being ‘enslaved’—as some unthinking people would say—and cramped by the marriage state, she has—while, of course, domestic duties take up necessarily much of her time and thoughts—a vantage ground and position in social matters from the mere fact that she is married. This does not require illustration because it is evident from the ordinary experience of life. It necessarily

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, quoted in *The Christian Home*, p. 95.



follows that where marriage has been rightly entered upon, there goes forth from the married state an influence upon society. In ever widening circles, moral forces operate in human life. The centre from which they work is the relation of marriage and the Christian family. It cannot be too thoroughly remembered that this does not merely concern married people. It concerns every one. If we enter the world in accordance, not only with natural law, but with the law of Christian revelation, we find that we are in a Christian family, that we are the children of Christian parents, and that we are affected in the highest degree by the fulfilment of duties consequent upon Holy Marriage. Maintain the sanctity of the marriage bond, and you keep before the eyes of a people those serious duties which follow from it. Shake the sanctity of that bond, and you not only injure a home and its individual members; you shake society to its centre.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE CONSEQUENT DUTIES OF MARRIAGE

#### II. EDUCATION

It has been maintained that Holy Marriage as conceived by the Christian Church and as taught of by Christ, is the entering into a relation of a deep and mysterious character, which is holy, which implies the union of two human beings, the most intimate it is possible to conceive, and involves a bond quite above human power to interfere with, which can never be broken in any circumstances except by God Himself through His permitting the death of one or the other.

Since this is so, such a 'holy estate' must imply serious consequent duties. These duties are concerned not only with the married persons themselves. They are concerned with them in the first instance; they have to do with the influence of the one upon the other in the training of their characters, and so preparing them for a future life; but they go beyond this. Duties arise out of marriage first of all towards the children who may be born in consequence of the marriage state, and then towards society in the different degrees of nearness of the married persons to it. The

consideration of these duties is not only important in itself, as they are consequent upon the marriage state, but it enables us to see more clearly what a serious state that is, and how impossible it is to tamper with it without the gravest misdoing.

We have considered the duty of forming an *ethos*, or atmosphere, or tone in family life and the treatment of children; and akin to that, it is necessary to consider how closely consequent upon the marriage state, especially when that state is blest with children, is the duty of serious attention to the education of the young.

Holy Marriage involves this duty.

In all civilised nations wherever Christianity has had, however indirectly, its natural influence, it is widely acknowledged that human improvement is an object to be put before us, and that in order to this there is a need of training. Civilised society is quite full of different plans and methods for this training. There are schools of all grades, and on various systems; there are universities; there are training colleges, and so on; these do their work more or less well, according to circumstances. In them all, society has and takes a deep interest, for it must be of the gravest importance to the welfare of society at large how its younger members are brought up. All such institutions, however, are more or less makeshifts. They arise from the necessities of the case, from the complicated condition of civilisation; but they are really there to do, in some measure, the work which is the appointed task of the Christian home. They do their work well, just in proportion as, *mutatis mutandis*, they act with the authority, and encourage the obedience, and draw out the conscientious sense of duty, which, in the first



instance, depend upon the *ethos* created by Holy Marriage and home life.

There are various theories of education which possess or have possessed the minds of men, but are more or less wanting, just because this has not been kept in view. Every one is familiar with the distinction drawn by thoughtful persons between education and instruction. Holy Marriage implies the duty of education. Instruction is a good thing, and it is necessary ; but it is only a part of what is needed. It means in reality only supplying a certain amount of useful knowledge. This is insufficient. The moral nature, the nature that has to do with the distinctions between right and wrong, and with the important duty of making a careful and right choice, *i.e.* of exercising the sovereign faculty of the will in accordance with the moral law, requires to be trained. The affectionate nature, the nature which leads us in proper degrees of kindly or loving relationship towards others, with proper reserves and proper self-surrenders, needs also to be carefully trained and disciplined. The intellectual nature, of course, requires equally careful training and disciplining, and that not merely that the mind may be enabled to receive a certain supply of useful knowledge ; but that in receiving it, it may be properly trained into using its own powers, like an instrument which requires to be put in order and kept in order, so that it may do its work. The spiritual nature in the same manner needs training by instruction in religious truth, and the raising and directing the affections towards religious objects. In fact, it is a duty not only to instruct, but to educate the young, because instruction does not make the most of our whole nature, and true education does.

Any theory of training, then, which rests upon a religious sense of the sacredness of Holy Marriage, must imply the duty of training a child in all departments of his nature, and not only in one.

Then, again, there have been theories proposed—proposed with great earnestness and conviction, which are quite inconsistent with the true relation of human beings which is implied in marriage. Rousseau was the apostle of a special theory of education, and there can be no doubt that his *Emile* had a very wide influence at one time upon French, and, indeed, upon European, thought. His main idea was that man had degenerated, chiefly through civilisation, from a state of nature that was altogether admirable. If he was brought back, therefore, to that state of nature by being allowed from his earliest days to do and think as he pleased, and to be untrammelled by systems of education and civilisation, he would grow up in a state of innocence; instead of the complexities and dishonesties to be seen in the world, there would be complete simplicity of character; and the largest individual freedom would be enjoyed with a natural and willing recognition of the equal rights of all. Such a view of education implied leaving the young to follow their own bent from the first. It was evidently enough only a dream, and a mischievous dream; for experience has always shown that wherever it has been approximated to, the results have been ruinous, and it is for the most part against those who have grown up under some system of the kind, learning *i.e.* to follow their own undisciplined whims and fancies, that society has been obliged to guard itself by means of law and police. Such a wild dream as to education

could only possess a mind which had closed its eyes to evident facts. 'Conceived and born in sin,' is the Scriptural way of stating the fact of the result of the Fall; and we know by our own observation that it is not merely from outward influences that evil comes, but that there is in human nature a corruption of the heart as well. If this is to be corrected, there must necessarily be training and discipline; education, in fact, in the true and wide sense.

Now Holy Marriage is that mysterious union of man and woman which effectively represents human nature, and which is under the influence of Divine grace. In it God offers His blessing and assistance to correct and elevate what would otherwise be tainted and wrong. And according to this Christian view of marriage, education is the application of Divine grace and Divine teachings to children that they may grow up what they ought to be. Children may be deprived of their parents by death before those parents can do their part in their education; circumstances may be such that a part of the work of education must be devolved by parents upon others. Still, if the education is to be right and true, it is not to be forgotten that, according to God's revealed will, children are to come into the world under a system, which implies the responsibility of others for them in training and teaching them so as to be fitted for the duties of life.

Again, it has been urged that the great point in religion is simply to teach a child to do its duty; that this need not rest upon any religious belief, but simply requires obedience to a law. This is not a sufficient view of education as based upon the duties consequent upon Holy Matrimony, and for this reason. To govern



life, there must be either a scheme of what is called 'independent morality,' or else an ethical scheme which leads up to and depends upon religion. It is worth while remembering the powerful arguments which make the latter the only true scheme. The question is, Can the teachings of moral consciousness in some way be verified, and do they point to relations between man and God? Now suppose that this is answered in the negative, then the simple authority of moral requirements becomes no longer available; for in obeying conscience, we may either act in childlike trust, or submit to a Divine command. If we put away (as on this supposition we must) the Divine command, only childlike trust remains. As life advances, however, and the child grows to years of discretion and thoughtfulness, it naturally examines into the claims of conscience. If there is no claim from a Divine Person, then it is naturally attended to only so far as it suits our wishes. It has been truly said, 'A sovereign title must either be perfect, or good for nothing; and against a detected pretender there can be no high treason.' Examine your conscience and find that it is only a remnant of superstition, of a trust which you misplaced because you were a child; and you will naturally treat it as a sham. The result is that right has no indefeasible title in itself; you begin to examine what makes it right, and you are almost sure to fall back upon that most unstable of all moral positions, viz. the utilitarian position, the doctrine of 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number.' You really become a disciple of hedonism, *i.e.* the guiding of life by pleasure. Some philosophers try to escape from the sensuous consequences of this philosophy, but they do

so in vain; they may choose to make their 'happiness' answer to virtue, but this is merely arbitrary, for others will define their 'happiness' in a different way. The fact is, if such a philosophy be adopted and man's moral consciousness does not carry him out into eternal relations and eternal worlds, then all he can do is to fall back upon his own little limited life and make the best of it according to his best opinion. Ethics are hedonistic or they are religious, and there is no middle course between these: it would be useless in education to appeal to a child to do right as an act of obedience to a law, forgetting that the moment he thinks he must see that a law implies a lawgiver. If marriage is not Holy Matrimony, but a mere contract between man and woman from the fulfilment of which comes the birth of children, then the education of such children would imply only such compulsion to obedience to their parents or to society as might be found necessary for the well ordering of the home or of the State. It would have no right to arouse an appeal to a moral consciousness in a child, and would therefore be unworthy of the name of education at all.

But supposing, on the other hand, that any true ethical system must lead up to and depend upon religion, then all is changed. We are here in the regions of common sense. If marriage is indeed Holy Matrimony; if it is a mysterious relation appointed by God and blest by God; then the consequent duty of education of children will mean an appeal to, and a treatment of, a moral consciousness in them which has a religious basis. If ethics depend upon religion as their ultimate basis, then what happens? When we are taught to do our duty, we are required to with-

stand frequently an opposing pressure, viz. the pressure of the lower wish or will. Why should we withstand it, if we are bidden to do so without any reason? At the best we do so with a mysterious reverence for something, we know not what. If, however, ethics are pointing to religion, we do our duty in the clear light of heaven, and knowing that we are obeying the voice of a Living One, who desires for us the very best, and who persuades, warns, and commands, from love to ourselves, while still respecting our freedom to disobey if we please. Our answer to the call of duty then becomes no longer a meaningless assent to the unknown, but the free expression of a personal affection to the personal God. Moral consciousness is then a communion between the human soul and the Being who made it, and true education wakens up the soul to a sense of that communion; it does not merely dominate or override the personal life, but appeals to facts within it. In the parental relation, the true parent in requiring absolute obedience in the child is teaching the child the sovereignty of Him whom the parent represents; and thus, gradually, the child's sense of duty is aroused and trained so as to apply to all departments of his being; the childlike mind is carried on in the full-grown man with a free sense of the Fatherhood of God, and the life of duty and the life of love pass one into the other, and discipline and form the tone of character.

One of the most important duties, therefore, consequent upon marriage, as it is understood by Christianity, is the *religious* education of children. If marriage be what it is represented to be in the Christian revelation, then it points to this religious education; and, on



the other hand, if Christian ethics must throw the soul forward to religion—as on independent grounds we have seen they must—they point to the sacredness and seriousness and indissolubility of the marriage bond in the nature of things. Again we may say—and history and experience give us examples enough of this truth—‘shake Holy Marriage, and you shake true education; shake true education, and you shake Holy Marriage.’

It has been pointed out by a serious teacher how very great the responsibilities of any generation are for the education of the generation that follows. The argument runs in this way. We are all subjected to the law of change. Everything within us, and everything about us, is changing. It may be very gradual, but it certainly is constant. Not only in the life of the body itself, but in the life of the mind and of the soul, and consequently in the customs, in the modes of thought, in the literature, of any and every age, changes may not be noticeable at the moment, but when we look back we become aware how great they have been. The duty which must be binding on parents, and therefore, going out into the wider circles of society, upon us all, is the duty of taking care that the law of change be made a law of progress. The management of this law, the proper application and working of it, is placed in the hands of those who are the grown-up and mature generation at the moment. It is an undoubted condition of our being that one set of people have an immense power over the happiness of another; that on their conduct, in fact, that happiness to a great extent must depend. This is the law which the Apostle touches upon when he reminds us that we are all of

us 'members one of another.'<sup>1</sup> And this law, which is an unalterable law of our being, illustrates strongly the seriousness of the question of marriage, and the gravity of the sin of in any way tampering with it. The parents or the teachers of one generation cannot alter the unchanging laws by which God governs His own world; before these all must bend. But the great duty of parents and of teachers (whose authority comes really from parents) is to see to it that whilst, like themselves, subject to those inexorable laws, the young of the rising generation should be educated so as to be good men and women. Of what sort the generation after us will be must depend, to a very large extent, upon how far we have realised the sacredness of the bond of marriage, and its consequent duties; on how far we have seen to it that authority and liberty have gone in due proportion hand-in-hand, that discipline and control and freedom and love and reverence have a real meaning in the minds and conduct of the young.

In the great battle which is always going on between good and evil, we have all of us, of course, to take our part; but we have to take the part of others as well to a great extent, once we admit the sacred laws and solemn sanction under which God approves the giving of life to personal beings in this world. Our duty for ourselves, but especially in the education of the young, is to defeat the forces of ignorance and sin. Each one enters this world with a very important equipment for the battle of life. We need not dwell on the mystery of heredity; that would carry us too far afield; but we may remember that the recollection of the mysterious facts involved in it adds all the more to the duty of

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xii. 5.

parents in taking pains as to the education of their children. Putting that aside, human beings enter the world at any rate possessed with the faculty of conscience. However philosophers may argue as to the origin or meaning of conscience, there it is. Every human being in a sense must begin with himself, and we are all aware of the fundamental truth represented by the word 'I.' This is not a mere thing, nor yet is it a mere abstraction. Nothing that the senses bring would suggest it to us. Each of us *knows with himself* certain impressions; and so each of us can say, 'I am conscious' of this or that, of sights or sounds, of the truth of propositions, and so on. We also say, as we have seen before, 'I ought' and 'I ought not.' As to this, it has been truly said: 'We cannot weed those expressions out of our dialect or out of the dialect of any civilised nation. Like the word "I" they have established themselves in language; it could not exist without them. How is that? Do you think it would be so if *we* could exist without them, if the *I* and the *ought* had not some very close affinity?'<sup>1</sup> We need not, then, for our present purpose, discuss various questions that have been raised by philosophers about conscience; it is enough to remember now that for the great battle man comes into life equipped with a germ of this consciousness, and that it is a duty to develop that germ rightly in the younger ones, and to give light to that consciousness. This is clearly a part of the fulfilment of the duty of transforming change into progress, which the older generation owes to the younger, which parents by the very terms of the marriage mystery owe to their children.

<sup>1</sup> Maurice, *The Conscience*, p. 32.



And then there is the equipment of reason. Intellectual training, of course, is a necessity, and is generally recognised as such; and it is not to be forgotten, especially in times like our own, that the most important part of it in early years is the training how to use the mind not merely to know, but to know well; not merely to think, but to think rightly. In the training of the reason there is required a discipline for duty as much as in other departments of conduct.

There is also that steady training which runs all through life, the training of the affections by love and loyalty, and thereby the training of that capacity for goodness which exists somewhere in every one. Into this comes most directly that which is most possible and most important in home life, a high and loving tone and atmosphere which assists the young to grow up furnished with the necessary powers of grace to meet temptation—as temptation, being part of the discipline of life, must assail us all—and is obviously needful for the training of those who are heirs of immortality.

The moment the Christian religion comes in with its solemn and blessed and serious teaching, we feel that we have to try to be worthy of such a trust; we feel—when we believe the mysterious transaction of our redemption—that children for whom Christ died are worth all our care.

Parents—and teachers who represent parents—are at best only human. God has placed these great trusts in the hands of men, not of angels. Difficulties must arise. Perplexing circumstances must sometimes confuse our vision as to apparently conflicting duties. Mistakes must be made. We have to learn in this, as in all

things, from experience dearly purchased. We have in this, as in other matters, to

‘ Rise on stepping-stones  
Of ‘ our ’ dead selves to higher things.’<sup>1</sup>

Still, the important truths which remain are these ; that to the honest and sound heart there is no final mistake ; that what is wanting to us in this case is supplied from higher hands ; that the duty of educating the young in the widest sense of the word arises from Christian teaching about Holy Marriage ; and that the duty which on independent grounds—up to a certain point—must come before the minds of all, itself witnesses to that serious and lofty view of marriage which is put before us by the Christian religion.

For the rest, allowing for all failings in ourselves either in marriage or in its consequent duties—

‘ God’s greatness  
Flows around our incompleteness :  
Round our restlessness, His rest.’

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<sup>1</sup> Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, i.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE RELATIONS CONSEQUENT UPON HOLY MARRIAGE

WE have remembered that under the Christian dispensation, marriage is not only a contract or a temporary agreement; but that to enter upon marriage is to enter upon a relation which lies deep in the nature of things, as appointed by the Divine Will, and to contract a bond which, according to the law of God, can be faithfully maintained with the assistance of Divine Grace, and can never be severed except by death.

It is reasonably to be expected that such being the case, other relations will necessarily follow. Such, in fact, is the case, and to consider these relations in the light of Holy Matrimony is to bring home to the mind their importance; and also, on the other hand, a consideration of that importance helps to deepen our sense of the sacredness of the marriage bond, and the great danger of tampering with it. Those relations are such as brotherhood, sisterhood, kinship, and in a true but lesser degree, the relation of masters and servants. It is thus that, beginning with deep and serious matters, human duties widen out in ever enlarging circles into all the various relations of human society.

What we may call, then, the relation of brotherhood



(in which is included, of course, the sisterly relation) is one that lies at the very root of things. We do not enter into it, as we do in the case of marriage—we find ourselves *in* it. It is true that we might find ourselves in it if the ties and rules of Holy Marriage were disregarded; but if so, this relationship would inevitably suffer, for, according to the Christian revelation, it is created—to be fully in harmony with the will of God—by the observance of the Divine rules relating to marriage. Brotherhood lies at the very ‘core of human society,’ and to a great extent the very *esse*, not merely the *bene esse*, of society depends upon it. It is possible, of course, for men and women to play fast and loose with this relation, as it is possible for them to play fast and loose with any other, but they can never do so except at their peril. We touch here the necessary laws of things; and those inflexible laws which are only the observed antecedents and consequents of things as they are, in accordance with the regulations laid down by God for the government of His own world, can never be disregarded, or trifled with, or violated, except at our peril. In the history of a fallen race like ours, much of the interest is to be found in the observance, or the violation, of what is implied in this relation. It gives a colour to our life. It connects itself closely with the very ground of our existence; it illustrates that, and cannot be separated from it. Greek and Roman literature, as well as the literature of modern times, gather much of their interest—it has been truly said—from this. If it comes, as it does come, from the very nature and constitution of things, it must have a morality of its own, and there must be an appropriate moral atmosphere or temper or *ethos* belonging to it.

Moralists have always felt that the great Greek dramas find their interest in loyalty or disloyalty to this and kindred relations. Sophocles has, with his refined penetration, seen this clearly and brought it out forcibly in his treatment of the stories of Eteocles, Polynices, and Antigone; and the great interest and power of one of his greatest dramas is to be found in the realisation of the splendid loyalty of the heroine to all that is involved in her place as a sister, and in the clear perception that the ties of blood are stronger than the ties of subject and king.

The tie or bond of this relation is very strong, for it is the tie of a common origin. It is possible for men to pretend to break the tie of marriage, as we see in the profanities and effrontery of divorce courts. That bond, of course, they can never break, but this bond of a common origin they cannot even pretend to break. The tie of marriage is more binding and sacred just because it implies the deliberate exercise of the will and conscious action in the presence of God. This tie, however, if not so awful and so sacred—as, of course, it is not—is more absolutely necessary; it is contracted without choice and without the exercise of will. It is a real relation between those who come from only one common parent; it is more thorough and deep between those who come from the same two parents; and it takes a special shade of sanctity for those who are born according to God's ordinance in holy wedlock.

Then, again, another and very important force in this relation is a common share in early memories and associations. Memory and associations are very real powers; they affect the action of the mind and the soul; they are possessions of which no one can rob us;

they are responsibilities. The tie of the relation of brotherhood is a strong one, even if these are not possessed; but the bond between two children of one parentage who are brought up together with the same home surroundings, the same associations, and possessing the same memories, is infinitely stronger, and ought so to be, than that between those who are not so brought up. In the latter case other duties, associations, and memories supervene, which have each their own binding power, and must be taken into consideration. Through circumstances of one sort or another, this tie may be immensely weakened, and rightly weakened, by the formation of others which in some degree correspond with it; but still it remains a relation from the very fact of a common origin, even when the natural consequences have not followed by the bringing up of children together under the care of their own parents, and with the *ethos* of their own home. There are cases in which greater gratitude is due, and truer affection called out, to others who have acted as true parents rather than to real parents themselves. This is so also with regard to brotherhood. Still, the relation, as having a common origin, remains, and in a healthy mind asserts itself in various ways without any loss of a sense of other duties. Now considerations of this kind, amongst other things, enormously emphasise the sacredness of marriage. If the bond of the relation of brotherhood be so sacred and real, and much more, the bond of the relation of child to parent, how sacred must that bond be which is to be formed as higher than these, and in some cases in actual defiance of them. If the tie of a man to his father and mother and to his brother and sister be so close;



and if he is to 'leave his father and mother'—and much more, brothers and sisters—'and cleave to his wife,'<sup>1</sup> how sacred and how indissoluble must this latter bond be, which puts aside to a great extent those others, so sacred and so absolutely necessary.

The relation of which we are speaking, then, besides its importance in other ways, illustrates and enforces the Christian view of Holy Marriage. It is indeed one of those mysterious powers which has risen up again and again unexpectedly, as we may say, in the history of mankind. It has been used to noble purpose, and helped the advancement of the race, and drawn out the better affections and deepened the character, and made possible works of self-sacrifice which have advanced the cause of humanity, and induced men to live in peace and harmony, and brought blessing upon many, not directly tied by this bond. Forgetfulness of it, or violation of it, have brought about precisely opposite results. Where it has been abused it has led to envies, jealousies, angers, wars, of the most serious kind. Its abuse has been seen in frightful family quarrels, in the fearful immoralities of incest, and in the darkest acts of fratricide. The horror with which mankind has, as a rule, viewed crimes of this sort is a witness to the sacredness of the relation. Even in sins there is a hierarchy. It is a mark of the foulest corruption and the lowest degradation when any set of people are callous to crimes of this kind; but the fact that mankind as a whole cannot be callous to them, witnesses to the sacredness of the relation and the solemn grounds of that sacredness. Cruelties and injuries towards others must be felt by all Christian

<sup>1</sup> S. Mark x. 7; cf. Gen. ii. 24; S. Matt. xix. 5.

people to be wrong and abominable, but cruelties and injuries when practised by any towards those bound to them in such a relation, are felt, almost instinctively, and not merely by Christians, to be especially heinous.

On the other hand, the bond of brotherhood, and the common origin and the old associations which give birth to it, or strengthen it, have often shown themselves powerful in arresting evil, or in awakening conscience when sin has been committed. There are many instances in civilised literature that illustrate this. It has been truly said that few instances can be more pertinent than some that come before us in Hebrew literature, in the Old Testament narratives, and in cases where we should least have expected it. The story of Isaac and Ishmael is a case in point. The tie between them arises from their having sprung from a common father. There was much to weaken the force of that tie, for their mothers were antagonistic, and one of them more highly placed than the other, and with a nature in which jealousy is very evident, notwithstanding the peculiar Eastern manner in which she condoned, and even advised, the relation between her husband and her handmaid. The half-brothers were much separated. One of them—and not the strongest—became the head of the family, and the other chief of a wandering tribe; but it is truly observed that the sense of their common origin and relation of brotherhood brought them together at their father's grave, and that the old tie of Ishmaelite to Israelite, amidst all the struggles of after days, was never quite forgotten.

As to the other instances of the same subject in patriarchal history :—

‘Far more distinct and vivid is the picture of the relations between Esau and Jacob. The plain man with his tendency to craft and cowardice, the genial hunter full of outspoken affection and hatred, have reappeared in every age, have been claimed as representative figures in every region of the earth. Amidst the strifes of characters so opposite, each desirous of dominion, each connecting it with a father’s blessing, there is still the mightiest sense of consanguinity. They plot against each other, and they embrace; the name of the father about whose favour they dispute, and his grave, are still meeting-points for the Edomite chieftain and the heir of the covenant. Then follows the story which has had such power over the minds of children and adults, a story full of fierce passions and wild deeds, but exhibiting the sense of a common blood in those who are taking a crafty and brutal revenge for the seduction of their sister, even in those who are punishing their father’s partiality by casting their brother into a pit. The sense of relationship is conspicuous in the oppressors as well as in the victim. It goes with him into prison and into Pharaoh’s palace; it is awakened in them by a punishment which appears to have no connection with the crime. . . .’ This is ‘the genuine record of a Divine education. But since it is the education of men with the coarsest natures, as little disposed as any could be to fraternal sympathies, it illustrates the ordinary history and experience of mankind more completely than any other can.’<sup>1</sup> It shows indeed how through this bond men learnt to overcome the natural selfish tendencies of fallen humanity, and how it is through this, and from the original and deep ties of the family,

<sup>1</sup> Maurice, *Social Morality*, pp. 78, 79.



created at its best by marriage, that men learn to be capable of social morality.

Just as in the case of husband and wife, the true temper or *ethos* is love and trust, a certain sense of dependence and a chivalrous sense of the duty of support; just as in the fatherly and filial relation, the true temper or *ethos* is loving authority, answered to by loving obedience; so in the relation of brotherhood, the true temper or *ethos* is a sense of equality, tempered and exalted by the affectionate sense of having drawn life from the same source. A good father will often be as a brother to his sons, but will never cease to be their father; and the almost brotherly feeling between them as the sons grow up—the feeling of mutual confidence and of understanding one another without explanations given—is exalted, solemnised, and made sacred by the sense of fatherhood and sonship, which is never lost. In any family, brothers may be of very different ages, and the older may have a kind of natural authority over the younger; they may be of great diversity of character, and endowed with very different intellectual gifts; but, especially when they are brought up together, and with the same memories and associations, the easy sense of equality, the sense that each must contribute his share in the service of all, overshines the whole relation. It is this temper which goes out with us to the world and arouses the generous and close feelings which belong to healthy minds of the same race. A great deal of actual life in its work and business is carried on by competition. In the present state of affairs, and with the increasing struggle for existence arising out of the increase of population, a very unhealthy competition has more and more sprung up.

Nothing can really resist whatever is unkind or unhealthy in this so effectually as the sense of brotherhood passing out from the family into the great family of man. If marriage brings before us, or is intended to bring before us, the close union of Christ and His Church, brotherhood arising out of marriage is meant to teach us our close union with one another in the human family. If the sense of brotherhood, into which we are educated by the Divine arrangements of the Christian family, really possesses us, we have within us a temper calculated to mate and master the spirit of selfish isolation and indifference to the joys or sorrows of others. The Christian Church itself is a great witness to these truths, and indeed they lie at the root of its life, and nothing more illustrates the abnormal wretchedness of a divided Christendom than the way in which these feelings are attenuated by 'our unhappy divisions.' In the Anglican Church, which has become in many respects so narrow and insular from her long separation from the rest of Christendom, the high spirit of authority and of filial obedience, and of consequent brotherhood, has greatly died away. It is an illustration of the fact that when great principles which lie at the root of our nature, and arise out of the nature of things, are neglected or abused, the results are of the most serious character. The more wide our outlook upon civilised society, the more we feel the importance of those relations which are consequent upon Christian marriage, and therefore of the importance of marriage itself. Tamper with that, and you tamper with the very foundations of things. Social morality is in danger of being torn up by the roots if a storm of policy or passion is allowed to

rage against the fundamental relations of the Christian home.

The whole idea of brotherhood, of which we have spoken as arising out of marriage, has been emphasised in every way by Christianity. In the Middle Ages, in our own country various brotherhoods grew up connected with trades and crafts; and the Church has always utilised the idea by the formation of various brotherhoods and sisterhoods for purposes of religion and charity. The fact of our Lord Himself being represented as the great Elder Brother, and of the Church teaching, in accordance with His revelation, that we have a Father in heaven, and that all of us are brethren, reminds us how deep this relation lies in the nature of things, and how closely intertwined, in the mystery of the Incarnation, are things human and things Divine. These teachings and principles have penetrated far into society; and, even among those who have no professed allegiance to Christianity, they have ameliorated the state of the weak, and infused into civilisation a great deal of the Christian temper.

There is another relation springing indirectly out of marriage, which illustrates the seriousness and power of that holy estate. From marriage comes originally the idea of home; and home is closely connected with the relation of masters and servants, and from it there goes forth a new spirit, new to a great extent to the world since Christ came, in the kindred relation of employers and employed. Any great and far-reaching and true thoughts of this kind are sure to be found in some measure, among the more thoughtful of mankind at least, even before Christ came; and among the better of the ancients there are found instances of the



recognition of a tie between master and servant. Of all positions in domestic service, there is none probably so sacred as that of the faithful nurse: she has a relation to the boys and girls of the family which is only second to that of their parents. Her office has its dignity, because it partakes in some measure of the office of the mother. This was recognised by the Greeks even before the Christian era, as we find both in Homer and in the Greek tragedians. Still, it cannot be doubted that the teachings and actions of our Lord brought this class of thoughts into more distinct prominence, and gave it fresh meaning. Since Christ came men have learnt more and more the dignity of service. Service is no longer, in the mind of a Christian, a menial or ignoble thing, but quite the contrary. For masters to despise or think little of their servants, and for servants to be above their business, is to depart from the principles of Christianity. 'I am among you,' said our Lord, 'as he that serveth.'<sup>1</sup> The relation of master to servant, and servant to master, only illustrates the true position of us all. 'The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister,'<sup>2</sup> said Christ. Service is the only greatness. A thoughtful philosopher, speaking on this subject, has said: 'We all know how much the welfare of the home depends upon this. For servants enter into the circle of the home-life, and can therefore promote or disturb its comfort, according to the position they occupy there. . . . Domestic servants have not merely to do their work, and to do it well, . . . but entering, as they do, our household, they have to be restricted by its rules, and to share in its habits, and to show by their actions that

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xxii. 27.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matt. xx. 28; S. Mark x. 45.

they belong thereto. . . . The moral duties, moreover, of masters, correspond with the moral obligations of servants. If the servant enters into the life, and submits to the rule of the home, the master has to look upon the servant as belonging to the home, and sharing its life and arrangements. Domestic servants are not mere labourers, but members, though transitory ones, of the household. Hence they must be maintained, and not selfishly misused. They must have their share in the joys of the family, that they may be able to sympathise also with its sorrows; they must take part in the religious exercises of the family, and not be excluded therefrom, that they too may be able to fulfil in a right spirit the duties of their calling; and they must be regarded and treated as free personalities, who have not sold all their time and all their powers to their masters, but have also a right to belong to themselves, and to have some time to themselves, some time for the care of their intellectual and spiritual interests. For both parties are responsible for each other; servants are responsible for the moral order, the property, and the good name of the family, which all so greatly depend upon them; masters are responsible for the physical and mental well-being of their servants, and if it so happens for their future. For if the possibility of a home of their own is offered to servants, the relation of master and servant must not be dissolved without counsel and assistance on the part of the master, or opposition to an unconsidered step.’<sup>1</sup> In opposition to this whole temper is, of course, the principle of slavery. But the ancient slavery of the Romans and Greeks, as well as the slavery of the Jewish Commonwealth, even though a passing and imperfect

<sup>1</sup> Luthardt, *Moral Truths of Christianity*, pp. 156, 157.

state of things, witnesses also to the sacredness of this very relation of which we speak. There are two principles, it is truly said, which have struggled with one another, and do struggle still in human affairs. (1) The principle of property and (2) the principle of right relation, springing out of a true idea of the marriage state and of the home. If the principle of property triumph, or in so far as it does triumph, it degrades the relations of life. If it triumph in the father's mind, he endeavours to exercise dominion instead of authority; if it triumph in the master, it seeks to treat the servant on purely mercantile principles, as 'so much wage for so much work.' If it triumphed in the slave-owner, it led to utter degradation, because it led him to treat his slave as a mere chattel. In the ancient slavery, Greek, Roman, or Jewish, there was a great deal of the right domestic feeling; the danger of it was, that it made it possible for the property principle to triumph in bad cases, far more than it could if there were servants and not slaves. Wherever it did triumph in those older states of civilisation, it led to corruption and ruin. Modern slavery was an infinitely worse thing. And we now see the hollowness and fallacy of the arguments for it drawn from the Old Testament. The Old Testament system of slavery, like polygamy, was tolerated as an imperfect and passing state of things, but it was hedged about by careful restrictions. It was not allowed merely to be governed by the property principle, but recognised a relation with mutual responsibilities. Modern slavery was a mere trade transaction of the most disgraceful character, and broke up the fundamental relations of life. Whatever mistakes may have been made in the mode of the



abolition of slavery by our own country (and mistakes were made), the abolition was the outcome of the noble efforts of an awakened conscience to put an end to a fundamental wrong.

‘The slavery in our West India Islands, and in what were our colonies on the American Continent, had not the faintest connection with the ancient serfdom of Europe. It cannot be traced, as we like to trace our abuses, to feudal or papal traditions. It is of Protestant birth; it belongs to the trade age. Men of high intelligence may plagiarise from the Greeks, and apply their doctrine of the dominion of intellect over brute force to the case of the white and the negro. But they know that the white stooped to the brutality of the negro in the act of capturing him; increased his brutality in the process of holding him; found his interest in warring against intellect in those whom he possessed; therefore gradually lost all feeling of the difference between intellect and mere force in himself. Let us make all possible excuses for those who purchased slaves or received them by inheritance; but the arguments from reason and religion must be regarded as altogether *ex post facto*. The spirit of trade, the desire for property, must be credited with the origin of the traffic, with the maintenance of it, with the resistance to every proposal for abolishing or even mitigating it.’<sup>1</sup> To have led the way in the destruction of this unrighteous traffic is one of the greatest glories of our country, and it was induced to a great extent by our veneration for the marriage tie, the meaning of home, and the sacredness of all relations which rise out of these.

<sup>1</sup> Maurice, *Social Morality*, p. 94.

If there is to be a clear sense of the true relations—in their various degrees—between human beings and their consequent responsibilities, established or made more binding by the Christian revelation, there must be a firm grasp of the sacredness and indissolubility of the marriage tie. Let that be relaxed, and men soon learn to think little of the filial and paternal relations, and of the dignity of service. Let that be held fast, and men learn by the very force of things the close bonds which unite them in different departments of life; in fact, that we are ‘every one members one of another.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xii. 5.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE RELATION OF CELIBACY TO HOLY MARRIAGE

No discussion of marriage can be complete without a consideration of the claims of the celibate or virginal life. This life differs essentially from the merely unmarried life. The unmarried life may be the result of circumstances, or of accident, so to speak, whilst the celibate life implies a deliberate, religious choice. At the same time, it depends upon Holy Marriage, because upon that depends the family,—and the family, not the individual, as we have seen, is the unit of society.

Among the ancients there was some idea of the importance and self-sacrifice of the virginal and celibate life. The Greeks had a high and reverent idea of the virginity of their goddess Athene. Bees and fire were the favourite emblems of the devotion and purity supposed to surround this sort of life. Among the Romans, there is the great example of the Vestal Virgins who guarded the sacred fire, and for whom was reserved, in case of any failure of their virgin devotedness, the most terrible punishment. They were buried alive in that case, and the reason seems to have been that they were considered too sacred for the hand of man directly to administer their punishment. The



case of the Flamens is also interesting. They were obliged to be married, and to be rigidly faithful to the marriage state, and they were degraded from their office, each of them, on the death of his wife.

While there was this traditional view among the ancients of the sacredness as well of the virginal as of the married life, the former did not necessarily take hold of society beyond the particular cases instanced. Among the Jews things were very different. There, virginity was looked upon as a distinct misfortune, and the reason was that with Jewish women there was always a desire to have the possibility of becoming the mother of the promised Messiah.

A new view, resting on much stronger grounds, was unquestionably introduced by Christianity. There had been, as we have seen, a haunting sense of the important virtue of purity, but—especially as time went on—this did not touch society widely. The Old World was drenched in licentiousness. That became worse and worse towards the close of the pagan Empire. Christianity brought in a perfect passion for purity; and this, as we have seen, was one of the most wonderful gifts to men's minds which came with the new Faith.

The real force of all this, and the root out of which the celibate life grew, was the example of Christ. Being both God and Man, He not only teaches, He *is*, Religion. He shows in the world the highest moral example conceivable. He did not lay any great stress on what men usually pride themselves upon—on intellect, imagination, æsthetic sense. He spoke in the simplest and plainest language, and appealed to the most common and elementary facts, to lead men to love and loyalty to all that was good. His example,

as every Christian acknowledges, was meant to be for all men. In spite of all differences of race, and thought, and character, and position, and opportunity, He was the guiding Light for all. It has been truly enough said that the fact that the pattern so put before us was at once the highest, and also intended for all, proves its divinity. The reason why this example serves everywhere is that it is the example of *a character*, and a character can be copied in the most varying circumstances. So the Church held up Christ as a model for her children, however much the likeness was varied in different situations and under different conditions. As He is the Supreme Goodness, that goodness can be shown under very different conditions and in very various degrees. Our Lord Himself so reveals Himself. When upon earth, He revealed Himself in the deepest humiliation, and sorrow, and suffering; we know that in heaven the revelation is of quite a different character. But each is a revelation of the same perfect goodness. In this way, as we have seen, our Lord's example may be applied in numberless different ways. There are great principles of His life which are applicable in all circumstances; and in this matter with which we are dealing at the moment, the virtue of purity or chastity is applicable to all.

The higher teachings of the world itself recognise so much as this up to a certain point. Civilisation, for instance, as we call it, takes human life in hand from one point of view. It—as it advances—may assist higher and more religious thoughts; but in itself it has to do with this world. In proportion as it has been leavened by Christian teaching; in proportion indeed,

we may say, as it is true to the better thoughts given to man by the Author of society, it does hold up a moral standard to a certain height. It supports such moral teachings as are necessary to keep society together; to keep it going, so to speak; it admits therefore much from above, but it also takes in much from below. No one can read many leading articles in some of our most influential newspapers without recognising, that whilst there is much that is good in the general teachings of the voices of society, and much that is specious, they are far below the Christian standard. For civilisation, as such, deals with all things 'representing the ease, wellbeing, and comfort of man in his present state.' Its influence works sometimes in accordance with, and sometimes in opposition to, the influence of Christianity. It is sometimes on the side of religion; it is often suspicious of it; it possesses very insufficient views of its meaning; no matter how friendly it may be, its principles and its methods are not Christian, they belong to itself. It is a great power, but it is a power distinct from religion even though religion influences it. It is a power which to a great extent sways our whole lives. It affects our literature, our laws, our political movements, our very social efforts, even when they profess to be most Christian. Its voice, and again its ruling force, is public opinion. That opinion is often most valuable, often most pernicious, from a religious point of view. It is not concerned with things as they are, but with things as they seem to affect the outward and more earthly wellbeing of society. As the Church grows older, and becomes more and more mixed up with the world, this public opinion has a vast effect upon her.



As the secular power succeeds in keeping the Church to a great extent in chains, this public opinion has more and more influence in shaping ecclesiastical matters. All through the history of the Church, at different times—as the Church is human as well as Divine—and to some extent in our own times, the hierarchy have been frequently influenced by this public opinion more than by the canons of the Church, or the teachings of Holy Scripture. To quote from a thoughtful writer, ‘the fears, the jealousies, the fixed traditions, the wise caution, the convenient understandings, the accommodations, the inertness, the diplomatic craft,’<sup>1</sup> which grow up in the course of years in any great institution, and especially among those placed in authority, have drawn their existence and taken their force from this public opinion. Valuable then as public opinion is, as the voice of civilisation, it can never be trusted as the voice of true religion. It goes too far in one direction, not far enough in another. We know what S. Paul thought of it when it dealt with spiritual matters, and the dignified contempt with which he treated it in such cases.

The Church, of course, must fall back upon something much stronger than all this in dealing with great moral questions, and questions affecting her spiritual responsibilities. She falls back on the example of Christ. In the grave matters with which we are dealing for the moment, civilisation and public opinion are entirely untrustworthy. We have seen in our own days how the public opinion of our own civilised country has sanctioned the enormities of the divorce court—in the teeth of the teachings of the Church—

<sup>1</sup> Church, *Cathedral and University Sermons*, p. 199.

which are spreading corruption far and wide in society. The example of Christ, however, which brought so vividly before men's minds in a practical form the higher claims of Christian morality, must still uphold the standard of the Church's teaching. With regard to marriage, that example taught, as we have seen, its holiness, its chastity, its indissolubility, both by the presence of our Lord at the Marriage Feast—on which Christians have rightly laid great stress at all times—and by the revelation that it is the outward expression of His own relation to His Church.

With regard to celibacy, the same is the case. This, as being seriously opposed to the loose thoughts of men of the world, has been always more or less a subject for jeering and contempt. Nevertheless, it has the authority both of the example and the teaching of Christ. Celibacy, we must repeat, does not merely mean an unmarried state, which may be a state of extreme selfishness, and indeed, as often in a corrupt state of civilisation, of extreme laxity of life. Celibacy, like marriage, is a vocation. Like marriage, it is not commanded, it is deliberately chosen, chosen from a religious motive, as an act of self-sacrifice for the sanctification of the soul and for the glory of God.

The dignity of the celibate or virginal life is taught us by the miracle of Christ's birth. If the degrading heresies which speak of our Lord as born otherwise than in this miraculous way were true, many of the sanctions of the celibate life would disappear. The most serious claim ever made by the Almighty on the loyalty of the creature was that made on Mary. It has been a widespread belief amongst Christians that, taught of God, and contrary to the usual Jewish

traditions, she had chosen a life of virginity. This was preserved to her—so it has been widely believed—throughout her life, whilst at the same time she was given the great dignity of Motherhood. There are the strongest reasons for believing that our Lady was not the mother of any child except her Divine Son, and that those who are sometimes spoken of as the ‘brethren of the Lord’ were His kinsmen, not improbably His cousins according to the flesh.<sup>1</sup>

It is impossible to imagine any incentive to the practice of the virginal life, any motive for celibacy more powerful than these. Since the Mother of our Lord, although His Mother, was also a Virgin, and since He Himself led the virginal life, the Christian Church had the very strongest reason for believing in the Divine approval of such a state. This told upon the early Church very strongly indeed; it was practically a new thing. It opposed in the strongest manner the ‘natural man.’

Among the Fathers of the earliest times, the virginal life is spoken of with the very highest respect. Christian teachers of the most widely differing temperaments and writing in the face of circumstances of the most various kinds speak in the same strain. Here is an example of their thoughts on the subject:—

‘It may be asked why, when many prophets and just men have taught and done so much that was

<sup>1</sup> That the ‘brethren’ of the Lord were simply His kinsmen may be deduced from the language of Scripture elsewhere. Compare, *e.g.*, the two accounts 2 Kings x. 13; 2 Chron. xxii. 8; and cf. S. Jerome *contra Helvidium*. Similarly, the double qualification required for the legal ‘firstborn,’ viz. that the child should be a son, and that he should be the firstborn of his mother, sufficiently explains the emphasis that is laid upon her ‘Firstborn Son.’



admirable, did no one either praise or choose virginity? It seems that this mode of life was reserved to be sanctioned by the Lord alone, since by His advent alone He taught men to pass unto God. For it was fitting that One who was Arch-priest, Arch-prophet, and Lord of Angels should also be called Arch-virgin. In the ancient times man was not yet perfect, and therefore had not strength to receive the perfect thing—Virginity. Though he had by birth the image of God, he still needed to recover God's resemblance. And this the Word was sent down into the world to accomplish; and He first took upon Him the form of man, punctured as it had been all over by multitudinous sins, in order that we for whom He bare it might be enabled again to take the Divine Form. And how can a perfect likeness to God be attained? Only like skilful portrait-painters, by drawing on the easels of our own minds the very lineaments of His human life, pursuing as disciples the path which He opened. It was precisely that we might have before our eyes, as drawn upon a tablet, a Divine ensample of life, in which we might imitate the Artist, that He chose, being God, to put on human flesh. For He did not say one thing and do another; nor give an ideal standard of excellence without teaching it as imitable, but at once taught and did what was useful and beautiful. What, then, did the Lord, the Light, and the Truth, when He came down into the world actually carry out? He maintained His flesh in incorruptible virginity in order that, if we would be like Him, we should honour that life.<sup>1</sup>

It will be seen from such a passage as this how strong the feeling was in the early Church. It came,

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Allies, *Formation of Christendom*, pp. 337, 338.

too, with the force of a reaction against the licentious life of the Old World, and like many such reactions, it led to extravagances and became unbalanced. It was natural enough that a strong ascetic view of life should take hold of those who had embraced Christianity with an enthusiasm and devotion which it is difficult to realise in our easy-going and spiritless days. This asceticism, when taking an extravagant form, had its bad side. It led extreme teachers to undervalue the sanctity and importance of marriage, and it encouraged a view of marriage which has been not unjustly called 'coarse and repulsive.' Out of this the tendency arose to such extravagant notions as are still to some extent fostered in parts of the Church, especially in the Roman Communion; notions which have led men to think of marriage as a concession to weakness and as an inferior condition, and celibacy as necessarily superior; whereas, Marriage as sanctioned by God is in itself a 'holy estate,' and one that may admit of very great unselfishness and self-sacrifice, while celibacy may also admit of quite the reverse. But none the less, the celibate or virginal life, as the Church derived it from the example of Christ, had a very high side indeed. It taught and exhibited the greatness of the dedication of the whole creature in a special and direct manner to the Creator. It exhibits, and exhibited strikingly before a whole world which was lying in corruption through lust, the dignity and beauty of purity. It taught men that what the world believed to be impossible was possible. It recalled to the minds of men with vivid distinctness the fact that this world is a place of education for another. It had, besides, an immense practical value. The work of the Church is to a great extent,

and ever must be, missionary work; and missionary work, to be done effectively, requires a freedom from the special and necessary cares and anxieties which surround even the Christian home.

There is no doubt that in the early Church the necessary celibacy of the clergy was never contemplated, though celibacy for mission purposes and for devotion to the Church's work was greatly encouraged. The ordination of those who had married a second time was forbidden.

If the ministration of married clergy was, as it was at first, permitted, celibacy, as we have seen, was greatly encouraged, and for obvious reasons.<sup>1</sup> When in the Western Church celibacy was forced upon the priesthood as a necessary condition of their calling, there were no doubt from this great gains. There have been also, unquestionably, grave corruptions; but it must be remembered that corruptions and scandals are not confined to a celibate clergy. In a fallen world, even the best things will admit of corruptions; and it is sad to remember that in every department, even in the office of preaching and in the use of Holy Scripture, and in the exercise of the high duties of the episcopate, the Church has suffered from the corruption of good things again and again. If the celibacy of the clergy, whether in the priesthood or the monastic Orders, has led, as it has, to painful scandals, it has also been an instrument of great good.

The Anglican Church was probably well advised in allowing that the clergy might be married men, especially as she has had to minister to a very domestic people. Anglican priests, when their homes have been well

<sup>1</sup> See also note 2 on p. 39.



ordered and their children well brought up, have had undoubtedly a special power for good among the English people. We cannot doubt, however, that this has been pushed too far, and with injury to the Church. The clergy have too often as a result been secularised, and lost to a great extent their sense of the priesthood.

In our own days, owing to the revival of Catholic life and thought in the Anglican Church, there has been a truer sense of the vocation and the value of celibacy. No Church has benefited more than our own from the ministry of women. Christ claims service from all. The service of women is, in the first instance indeed, needed in the family, because the family is the very unit of society, and woman has a special power there. But the Sister of Charity is also needed; and in these later days, in our own Church, the revival of her work has been of the highest importance.

It is probably more and more felt now, considering the vast increase of population, the great sins of great cities, the increasing extent of our colonies and the loud calls from the mission field, that there is more and more need that we should get out of the notion that has prevailed so much for the last three centuries, that the clergy are expected to marry, and should rather encourage celibacy in view of the pressing needs of the time. There can be no doubt that if Christianity and the Catholic Faith are to hold their ground, there is an increasing need of concentrated work and purpose, and of high self-sacrifice amongst the clergy. In connection with the whole subject, it ought not to be forgotten that the phrase which came from the Middle Ages as to the 'Three Vows' being those of

‘poverty, chastity, and obedience,’ is somewhat misleading. It ought to be poverty, *celibacy*, and obedience, for chastity is a virtue which must be cultivated by every Christian. If we take a right view of the needs and vocation of human souls, we shall not need to talk of the celibate life being more perfect than the married life. We shall understand that the one life or the other will be the path of perfection, according as it comes from a true vocation, and is entered upon in the faith and fear of God; and the more we see the need of celibacy in some, and the higher the idea we have of its greatness and sanctity, the more will be exalted in our minds the dignity of Holy Marriage and of family life; for this reason:—

‘The Christian home is the best training for’ the celibate ‘life, as it is for all other forms of service of God. . . . Those who think of home as chiefly connected with love and marriage and parents and children, are tempted to imagine—if they happen to be prejudiced against the celibate life—that it is opposed to the very idea of home; or, if they happen to be strongly in favour of it, that home is opposed to the very idea of it. This surely is a mistake. It has been said that “a religion for the world must be a religion for all times and lands, for all changes of society, for all forms of political life and directions of human activity, for all sorts and conditions of men, for high and low, for the Greek and for the barbarian, for the wise and for the unwise, for the few and the many, for the strong and for the weak; because God, one God, made them all.”’<sup>1</sup> And it may as truly be said that because God has shown that man must find himself in some sort, when

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Home*, pp. 204, 205.

he wakens up to this world, in home life, and that his best and happiest condition is to find himself in a Christian home; so the Christian home must be the true nursery for all lines of life and forms of activity which are suitable to a Christian calling, and therefore the true nursery of the virginal or celibate life quite as much as of the married and unmarried.

We see, then, that there is a very important relation between marriage and celibacy. 'It would be waste of time to dilate upon the enormous advantages reaped, not only by Christianity, but by civilisation, from the life and work of the great monastic orders. Every one who is not hopelessly ignorant of history must hold in honour the names of S. Benedict, S. Francis, S. Catharine, S. Theresa.'<sup>1</sup> It would be equally waste of time to dilate upon the enormous value to many of the holiest and best of men, of having been trained in Christian homes, and especially by Christian mothers. Celibacy and marriage are both high callings coming from God. They are closely connected, as we have seen, and each of them has its proper place, and the disparagement of either is an injury to the whole work of the Church.

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Home*, pp. 204, 205.



## CHAPTER XVII

### THE MODERN DANGERS TO HOLY MARRIAGE

It has been remarked that there are many similarities—with, of course, very striking differences—between our own times and the later days of the pagan empire. In those days there was very great moral relaxation, and things were in a state of grave confusion. This confusion and the strange and lax state of things were consequences of what had been going on for some time. When Christianity came, it came to a Roman society which was in a state of practical despair. Even after Christianity had obtained a considerable foothold, things remained in much confusion. There was the difficulty of adjusting the habits and customs of society to the laws of Divine Revelation. On the heathen side there was anxiety and no clear sight; on the Christian side there was often pedantry and a narrow or mistaken application of principles. The leaven had to work long and slowly before it leavened the whole lump, and Christian principle and temper and doctrine did not all at once come out clearly and influence society rightly. An illustration of this may be given from an able writer. Speaking of the state of things in the province of Africa early in the fifth century, he writes as follows :—

‘Volusianus, one of the great family of the Albini, a son of that old heathen pontiff described by S. Jerome, and himself a pagan of the gentler sort, was, in 412, in a company in which the discords of philosophy and the claims of Christianity were canvassed. In particular, Volusianus proposed the question, whether the precept about turning the other cheek to the smiter could be reconciled to the policy of a dominant state; whether, in fact, Christianity was not the cause of the decadence of Rome. The discussion was reported to S. Augustine by Marcellinus, a friend of Volusianus, and drew from the Bishop an elaborate reply. The letter in which Augustine strove to remove the doubts of Volusianus and his friends has a great interest, as containing the germ of the famous work which Augustine commenced in the following year. The Gospel, he says in effect, is not opposed to war waged justly and mercifully. So far from its doctrines being hostile to the stability of the State, if they were practised by public servants and citizens of every degree, they would prove the salvation of the State. The decay of the Roman commonwealth began long before the coming of Christ in the decay of the old Roman morality, in the spread of venality and licence, which are described in scathing terms by heathen moralists and satirists. Whither, he asks, might not this tide of human depravity have borne us if there had not been planted above it all the Cross, by clinging to which we might save ourselves from being swept into the abyss? In this morass of vice, this decay of the ancient discipline, there was need for authority from on high to bring home the lesson of voluntary poverty, chastity, benevolence, justice, concord, real piety, all the brightness and strength

of virtue; and that not merely for the virtuous conduct of this life, nor to secure complete harmony in the earthly commonwealth, but also to obtain eternal salvation and admission to a celestial commonwealth which shall know no end, to whose citizenship we are joined by faith, hope, and charity. So, as long as we are strangers and sojourners, we must endure, if we cannot amend, those who wish to establish the State on a foundation of the impunity of vice; whereas, the early Romans founded and gave it greatness by their virtues.' There is some similarity in our own times to those of which S. Augustine writes. There is the great difference that Christianity has been long in power, and has brought with it immense blessings. Gradually, however, a great conflict has come on. On the one side is Christian faith, practice, and worship; on the other, ideas and beliefs which tend to their destruction. The Christian Church itself has been affected by it within. In the very camp itself there is plenty of treachery, plenty of willingness to make agreements with the world and to depart from the stern standard of Christian teaching. Probably in the battle there are better manners displayed, but unfortunately it is often because men care less. The opponents of Christianity, however, do care. They put aside the old safeguards; they laugh at the notion of a discipline to be exercised by the Church; they are willing enough for the Church to hold her ground, so long as she does not teach anything in particular as a definite truth that must be believed, or enact anything in particular as a definite course of action which must be followed. Christianity in its clear definitions of Truth, and in its insistence on the necessity of certain duties, is



being quietly, sometimes contemptuously, put aside; and that too often with the tacit acquiescence, or even with the implied approval, of those who should be foremost to resist. It was Christianity which was the power by which Roman society recovered from its deep corruption; and when there is any shaking of Christianity or of Catholic faith and practice—as there is at present—it is no speculative question, but a very practical one, and we tend to fall back into a kind of modern paganism. If we have faith in God and do our duty, we may be sure indeed of an ultimate victory, but it will not have been won without terrible losses meantime. To say nothing more, an atmosphere is created by such a state of things; that atmosphere is breathed in by the young, and in such circumstances they are in danger of growing up with lax thoughts about most sacred things.

There are many causes also at work in modern days which tend to deprive us more and more of what may be called moral backbone. Whilst sin and ignorance, whilst unhappiness and weakness, are all round us; whilst the consequences of sin are as plain as ever, and the usual solemn attendants of life—sorrow and sickness, temptation and death—are still here, there has been an immense development of prosperity and wealth, and an immense increase of luxury. These things have their enervating side, and that side is clear enough in our own days. Religion itself has become, in many cases, a profession of philanthropy, and ‘righteousness’ is made an excuse for the neglect of duty. There is an over refining; there is a splitting of hairs; we have become so very ‘charitable,’ that there is hardly any colour which marks off the character of

right and wrong. Moral indignation has almost ceased to be a possible virtue, because excuses are made for everything, so that there are few things left at which to be indignant. The natural dislike to taking trouble has been greatly developed, so that very often little trouble is taken except for the overthrow of severer views of religion, which would be troublesome to natural laziness or selfishness. There is a noticeable want of zeal and enthusiasm about noble things and high religious effort, and a painful tendency to visit with reprobation, or to check by every possible means, such enthusiasm and such zeal. Everything is brought into debate, and people get almost unconsciously into the habit of looking upon the Church as a debating society, in which the most opposing opinions may find a home. There is, of course, a good side to all this. Some take sides more definitely and have a clearer faith; but the rush for pleasure, and the rush for wealth, tend to make men careless about higher things; and the noble duties connected with a dignified patriotism are put aside in the interests of selfish ease, whilst the cant of a pseudo-morality is rendered palatable by being sugared over with pseudo-religion. No one can fail to feel this dangerous laxity of sentiment. To state a distinct truth distinctly is to give a shock to many, and is looked upon as almost a mark of bad manners.

There are other changes in our age which in the same way—although with their good side—have also helped in the same direction. Change, of course, is inevitable. To transform change into progress, as we have seen before, is an important duty for each generation. But we are frail human beings, and that duty is

not always successfully performed. No change has been greater, even in the remarkable last fifty years, than the change in the work and opportunities of women. In this there has been much that is excellent. It is excellent that women should have had greater opportunities for education and for developing their special gifts. It is right, too, as a merely practical question, that as all women certainly cannot marry, they should be enabled to have a larger independence and more chance of self-support. In these ways we have made great advances. Along with our advances, however, there are some attendant circumstances which we can hardly fail to deplore. Some of the characteristic charms and beneficial influences of women have been jeopardised, if not sacrificed. There has come in amongst many a looser way of thinking of the dignity of woman and her true place in human society, which must be deplored, as it has led in the same direction of moral laxity.

On the darker side of our modern society, still darker colours have been laid on through French influence. There is much that is beautiful in the special gifts of the French nation ; but Parisian life and Parisian ways have ever had a perilous influence upon morality. Whilst there are some charming writers in France, French literature on the whole is terribly corrupt, and in France, to an extent alarmingly great, the first principles of morality are boldly and openly set at defiance. A vast literature is there circulated without hindrance, which depends for its interest and zest upon the grossest indecencies. We have to be thankful, in no Pharisaic spirit, that there is a higher tendency, on the whole, in this country. There have



been many and powerful forces for lifting the tone of romance literature, of journalism, of the stage—those great modern teachers—into higher spheres of thought, but still French influence is deeply felt. The nations are drawn closer together than they formerly were. Our fear of disagreement has become so great as to be almost morbid, and the consequent closeness of different peoples has made the literature and manners of France a great deal more our own than they ever were before.

We live also in what is called a critical age, though ‘criticism’—being, as it is said, the only trade for which no apprenticeship is needed—is, in this country, unless in such brilliant exceptions as Mr. Matthew Arnold and Mr. John Morley and Mr. Lilly, a very poor concern. In the Church of England, ‘criticism’ has been driven to the wildest extremities, in order to make a Catholic Prayer Book conform to Protestant or lax opinion. Principles have been strained to snapping and words used in unreal meanings.

The two great examples of this are to be found in a casuistical use of the Marriage Service and the Creeds. The action of ecclesiastical authorities with regard to Holy Marriage has given cause for grave anxiety. It is true that the Pan-Anglican Conference can claim no real authority in Church matters, but it is an impressive gathering, and must from its constitution have considerable weight on the minds of men. Its utterances on the marriage question have been far from distinct. In the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury, resolutions were passed on the subject of the law of the Church of England in regard to Holy Marriage, which were all that could be desired, but their force was much enfeebled by the utterances of the Upper House.

Moreover, those of considerable ecclesiastical position have allowed themselves to speak of the Marriage Service in its distinct, definite, unmistakable, dogmatic utterances as to the indissolubility of marriage, as though there were any doubt whatever as to the law of the Church of England on the matter, and as if that Service merely expressed an 'ideal.' According to such teachers, we should address Almighty God in a solemn moment as to His law being that it should 'never be lawful' to put asunder those who are married, while all the time we should be really saying—and to God too—that that was only 'ideal,' and that the thing might readily and lawfully occur. It will be easily seen that to treat any service in this way is to empty the Prayer Book of its dogmatic value. On this 'ideal' theory, Holy Baptism, the Holy Eucharist, Confirmation, everything, would lose all precision and certainty. We cannot but feel that all these things constitute great dangers for the young of our country as regards a true estimate of the sanctity of marriage.

Then, again, there are further dangers of another kind. We are living in a highly realistic age, and it is even possible in literature to allow the photography of filth to take the place of artistic delineation—even if grave and terrible delineation, like Balzac's—of human life. This tone of mind and work is considered to be 'practical.' It is unquestionably lowering. Our sense of beauty is a very high gift from God. 'Beyond that which is useful, and that which is true, and that which is good, and that which is orderly and well proportioned, and that which is beneficial and salutary, there clings obstinately to the soul of man this idea of

what is beautiful in its infinite forms and degrees.’<sup>1</sup> There may be very different views as to the beautiful; and it may seem very difficult to clear our conception of it to ourselves. Still, there is this wonderful force in us. ‘What is it, this incorrigible, importunate, indestructible sense of beauty which we may well find nothing to satisfy, but which we will not allow to be in vain? What is it, that fitful, capricious, fugitive thing, which none have seen in its perfection, but of which every one believes that he has seen the image; which is so variable to different eyes and hearts, and to the same at different times; but which while its spell and charm last, fills, and governs, and satisfies the soul?’<sup>2</sup> This sense of beauty touches different parts of man’s life and experience. It is affected by sound in the harmonies of music; it creates our pleasure in the achievements of art; natural colour, natural scenery, the changes of light on landscape, on sea, on sky—all affect it. It is wakened up by the human face, and by our knowledge of, and intercourse with the human soul. It has much to do with those affinities which draw together man and woman, and has its place in those predilections which naturally precede a marriage of affection. It has had a great deal to do with the nobler side of that chivalrous feeling of man towards woman, which is evident in the better phases of Christian civilisation. It has been closely connected with the better kind of romantic literature, both in poetry and prose; it connects itself with some of our highest thoughts and feelings, and tends to lift us up towards what we ought to be. In this way it is a kind of handmaid of the faith which ‘justifies,’ that is,

<sup>1</sup> Church, *Cathedral and University Sermons*, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



which makes us what we ought to be, by lifting us to a higher life, and fixing the eyes of the soul on the noblest objects. Now the age in which we live is one in which this sense is not prominent. The struggle for existence, the fierceness of competition, the increasing efforts to make money in every possible way, and the increasing tendency to make the possession of money the standard of human value—however much these things may be excused from the necessities of the case—all tend towards taking the poetry out of life, and making our age an age of mediocrity and of commonplace. It is not that the romantic, in the true sense of the word, can ever die out of human life, but it may less affect it. If we get into the way of measuring everything by its trade value, we soon cease to have noble and generous thoughts. All this—there can be no doubt—has its effect upon the question of marriage. It tends to make it less a question of admiration and affection, and more a question of calculation and self-interest. Imprudent marriages cannot be right, but the condition of things in the present day is such as to make marriages which are not imprudent widely difficult. So many luxuries have become necessities, and we so unconsciously, but certainly, fall into the way of acting as if a man's life consisted in the 'abundance of the things which he possesseth,' that young people are tempted to think, as it is said, that they must begin where their parents end. There might often undoubtedly be happy marriages if people were contented with more simple ways of living, and such as fall naturally within their means. There are difficulties in these matters in our own days, and we know perfectly well—human nature being what it

is—that among large numbers of men, who do not choose celibacy as a matter of religious duty towards their Church, or their country, or their more needy relatives, there is a tendency to discourage marriage; and to discourage marriage is to lower the tone of high and pure affection, and to encourage sin.

The duty of the Church under such circumstances is clear enough. She has to console, support, and comfort those who are in trouble or difficulty. She has to keep high and inflexible the standard of human conduct, and especially in this blessed and beautiful relation. She has to help men to greater simplicity of life and manners; and, above all, she has to keep before their minds the fact that she can dispense the wonderful gifts of grace, which raise human nature into the closest intimacy with the Divine Nature, and give to even fallen creatures the vigour of self-sacrifice and strength.

For these and many other causes, there can be no doubt that there are many dangers in our times in relation to Holy Marriage. If those to whom we look for guidance in the Church fail to fulfil, as in troubled times they unfortunately often do, their high mission in these matters, Christian parents must fulfil theirs. When children are brought up in ways that are right in a Christian home, they will, whether married or single, learn to use Divine Grace when it is needed, and in all their callings and duties to carry with them Christian principles. Never has the teaching of good home life been more necessary than in our own days. There is everywhere a growing laxity of principle. Men more and more, as we have seen, fear pain and discomfort rather than sin. A stern sense of the greatness of

right and the dreadfulness of wrong is fast dying away; it requires all the exertions of the Christian home and the Christian Church to meet the difficulties. For we may be sure, that wherever there is any moral laxity, it will especially be felt in the relation of man to woman, and woman to man. We have to try to learn a nobler view of humanity, and therefore of the sacredness of the marriage bond. The more we have that noble view, the more we shall meet well the difficulties and dangers which beset us. We have to remember and remind others that the idea of a true humanity comes from the will of a Heavenly Father; that His creatures' life and happiness and true relation to one another is His will; that where they have fallen short of it, He has redeemed them by the mysterious Incarnation, the life and death of His beloved Son; that where they are weak in carrying out the consequences of that Redemption, He supplies them with His Divine Spirit, to lead them into all truth, and to give them strength for their struggle; and that, therefore, the right relation of man and woman in Holy Marriage, according to God's will, is a true and sacred thing, and that all difficulties surrounding it can be removed by, and only by, true religion.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE TRUE PREPARATION FOR HOLY MARRIAGE

IF Holy Marriage is to be all that Christianity would have it, there is need that the young should be taught its dignity and greatness, and the necessity of true preparation for it. The dignity of human life is one of those things which must not be forgotten. Many reasons combine, as we have seen in a former chapter, to increase the dangers for the young, in this regard, at the present time. Perhaps from increased means of intercourse, and wider diffusion of knowledge, the sins and sorrows of mankind are brought more prominently before the minds of all. There is a sunny optimism which is natural to healthy youth. There is a time in springing life when—if circumstances be not strangely adverse—it is natural, and indeed right, that the young should take a sunny view of things. But optimism does not represent the true facts of the world as they are. People with healthy constitutions and easy circumstances, who have, so far, had no severe illness, or striking reverse of fortune, or real heartache, may and naturally do take a somewhat sunny view of life. This cannot last. The facts of the world are great facts. The world is a very awful world. It is impossible to close one's eyes to the truth that there is much pain

that cannot be alleviated, and misery and sorrow that cannot be cured, and poverty and toil that cannot be relieved. 'A vale of tears' is one description of life, not altogether untrue. There is perhaps less buoyancy of faith than in other times, and the consequence is that pessimism is far more general now than optimism. Some men deliberately accept the philosophical conclusions of Schopenhauer. To them human life is a misery and a curse; to them 'the will to end the race' and not 'the will to live' should be the guiding principle. And so there come the whinings of distorted sentiment, or the defiant hardness of despair. Discontent and cynicism darken life, and any bright hope for man or for the human race is swept away. There is much of this, and there is much reason for this, and yet it is not the whole truth. If there are many sources of sadness in a fallen and sinful world, there are joys also which remind us of a better hope. The faculties of enjoyment are in us. They are facts. The relationships of life, if we will, such as those of father and child, of friend and friend, of lover and lover, of husband and wife, are endless springs of pleasure. The play of the affections is the happiness of life. For whatever reason, joy is found in life. Life will assert itself amid whatever sorrows, as having in it elements and powers of joy. To meet the real sorrows, and the darker view of things, there are reasonings which are by no means contemptible, but reasonings do not always deeply affect us. Christianity insists on certain truths not to be forgotten, and handy to breast the tide of adverse and depressing facts. (1) We are bound, as Christians, to believe in the Providence of God; we are bound to accept the truth that if we trust Him, He will guide us,

and will never guide us wrong. (2) Again, we are bound to look upon the exercise of strength as a duty. We are not to give way to the attacks of despondency and downheartedness. (3) Again, if we are serious and thoughtful, not sentimental and morbid, we must realise that however bad, in many ways, our time may be, it is also, in many ways, the best epoch to live in of which we know in the world's history. (4) And further, the more deeply we look into life, notwithstanding its mysterious and terrible sorrows, notwithstanding the 'death veil' that still hangs over all people, there is a joy in the possession of life: there is an honour and dignity—of the sense of which we cannot altogether rid ourselves unless our minds are utterly diseased—in the mere fact of being men or women.

Whatever be the darkness or shadow on human life, Christianity holds before us the duty of cultivating—because of our human nature—a high and dignified self-respect.

Such high and hopeful thoughts of human nature are ever to be cultivated if we are to be useful and real Christians.

There are, as we know, special reasons supplied by Christianity for these. As Christians, it is revealed to us that we are the children of God. To realise that revelation in any measure is to give a new meaning and dignity to life. As Christians, we are taught the value put upon our nature by the coming in the Flesh of the Eternal Word, by the place He has taken as one of ourselves, and by the mysterious glory of His Sacrifice of Himself for the sins of the whole world. We are taught that life, with all its joys and sorrows, is an opportunity for the education of character; that in



life, each human life is to be formed and trained for higher things; and that all the experiences of life have their value from this. The end and object of life, we learn, is not so much pleasure (though pleasures come) as strength; not so much comforts (though comforts are found on the way) as goodness. God's purpose, we learn, is a deep and large one, not merely to make us cheery and happy, but to lead us to the perfection of character.

It would be hopeless folly to quarrel with the fact that life is a time of trial. It is a fact. Every relation of life must take that fact into consideration. There is, to any sincere and healthy mind, nothing morbid or oppressive in the thought of this, but there is something solemnising and strengthening. Love and death are the two greatest forces in the world. To all true hearts there is a certainty that love, in the long-run, will be the conqueror. But hearts must be true and braced for the battle. All the little things (so called) of daily life, all the ups and downs, all the trials and perplexities, are only means for forming the right cast of character. Human intercourse in this world is the ordained method of trial. The play of the affections, rightly regulated, is the deepest source of joy. The deepest relation of man to woman, and woman to man, as recognised and blest by Christ, must be one founded on real and serious affection, and high and noble thoughts of trial and destiny and capacity in the human race, and the respect of each for each.

It is true that there are happy marriages which have followed on what is called 'love at first sight.' This does not in the very least contradict Christian teaching. There may be souls, and doubtless there are, who 'at

first sight' are drawn to one another by a very real sense of affinity. For a Christian, however, it remains incontrovertibly true that deep and lasting love must rest upon, or go hand in hand with, respect for character. To take a large and generous view of human nature, to see in it sorrows indeed, but also vast possibilities of advance; to have a secured belief in the triumph of goodness, and a convinced seriousness as to the purposes and greatness of human life—this is essential for a really healthy mind, and on this will follow a true respect for that one member of the human family chosen as an object of special and devoted affection, to be the sharer of life in its deepest, truest sense, in its mysteries, its sorrows, and its joys. Such, we may well believe, is the broad and general preparation for entering rightly on Holy Marriage as looked upon by a Christian.

A further consideration which comes in, is this: life is a journey; life is a work; life is a trial time. How best to use such a great opportunity is a serious thought for all. To some God comes and advises that this opportunity be used in the closest conceivable partnership with another. Marriage to them is a vocation. God's call has come to them in this way. God is ever calling His children; calling them to various joys and sorrows, to new lines of trial, but ever calling to follow His guidance. In Holy Marriage, there is, for Christians, the sense of a call. If men and women listen rightly, heart is drawn to heart, and so they prepare to enter on this solemn relation, each with respect for the other—the partner in life—and each with a sense of the seriousness and blessedness of a call from God. If men and women learn to think

of it in this way, their whole view of the relation into which they are about to enter is ennobled—lifted above the realm of mere passion to the region where passion is sanctified. Holy Marriage is undoubtedly entered into by many ‘unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly;’ and if it be, as it is, a great Sacrament, and a relation of unique importance, the young should be led to think of it in this serious and true way.

(1) Every serious Christian must believe that, whilst it is the will of God that ‘all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth,’<sup>1</sup> ways of sanctification are still very different. There may be, and there are, those who are called to serve God in a single life. Those who enter on the married relation should have satisfied themselves that they are guided by God; that they follow God’s call.

(2) It has been well observed that three thoughts should be before us in marriage if it is to be rightly entered upon :—

(a) There are implied in marriage serious obligations to be fulfilled. Duties must be looked forward to in regard to the chosen partner of life. There must be tender love, and large considerateness, and unflagging faithfulness. This must be thought of to form firm resolutions, and seek for Divine grace to carry them out. Duties have to be looked forward to in regard to children whom God may give, and in regard to the many fresh responsibilities which arise out of this new relation. Whatever may have been the claims and calls before, in the married state husband and wife alike must each expect new calls and new claims, which will demand their exertions to live an edifying and Christian life.

<sup>1</sup> 1 S. Tim. ii. 4.



(b) And some crosses and trials of life must be looked forward to; some burdens to be borne there must be. Many indeed, and terrible, are the crosses, of course, from thoughtless and ill-assorted marriages; but some must be expected in the happiest unions. The best and wisest of husbands is not always perfectly good and wise. The most loving and self-denying of wives cannot be expected to be entirely faultless. We are in a fallen world, and we are fallen beings. We cannot expect everything always to go smoothly. The circumstances of life, also, may bring great burdens. If there are children given to a marriage, their training may imply grave anxieties. Good fortune in the outward and necessary means of life is not guaranteed to a Christian. It is the wise mind, the sturdy strength, the prudent effort, and the trust in good, which support men and women through these things. To expect some extra burdens in entering upon this high relation is the part of wisdom, to seek for grace to bear them well is the part of a religious mind.

(c) It has been said, too, with some truth, that this state, as indeed all states of human experience and responsibility, has dangers of its own; that to these the conscience must not be indifferent. Marriage has its own laws and restraints. It has its permitted happinesses; it does not permit unbridled and unregulated desire. That it is a union of two immortal beings, and that each must have a care for the other and a constant respect for heart and conscience, must not be forgotten. Indeed, no state of life so teaches a true heart the duty of considerateness and respect for another. Dangers sometimes threaten also in regard to other things. In all life a Christian must put

God first. The adjustment of claims and duties is ever, and ever must be, part of our trial and education on earth. The married man or married woman has the duty of carefully reconciling their duties each to the other with their paramount duty to God. This may not always be easy, but it must be done, and the fact is not to be forgotten, but considered and prepared for in preparation for marriage. Painful and difficult it may be, but at times it may be necessary to avoid too complete complaisance towards the wishes of even the nearest and dearest where they conflict with the will of God.

What may be called 'the cares of this world' and a wise management of temporal goods must also necessarily come in with married life, in a degree greater than in other callings. This will be all the more the case when children are given, and when their support, education, and advancement have to be considered. And yet, side by side with this, it is a Christian duty to keep some interior detachment from the things of this world, some 'inward separation from outward things.' This cannot be an easy matter, but it is to be considered thoughtfully, as one of the burdens to be borne in married life.

In preparation, then, for marriage, such things should be considered, for the important thing is that no power on earth can, under any circumstances, break the marriage bond. That bond is deep, mysterious, indissoluble; to enter into it well implies some wise consideration of its inseparable conditions.

But though this is so, such wisdom is no dissuasive from marriage, only a teaching to marry wisely and well. When our Lord spoke of the indissoluble char-

acter of the marriage bond, His disciples leaped to the conclusion that marriage should be avoided. Our Lord corrected them. He reminded them that it was a question of God's will and God's call; that not all are called to a celibate life; nay, indeed, in most cases, the call is to marriage, for God Himself has taught us that 'it is not good that the man should be alone.'<sup>1</sup> The true consequence of such thoughts is not the avoidance of marriage, but the making it what it ought to be—a noble and a blessed state of life.

(3) Then, further, in preparation for this, though indeed for every state of human responsibility, there is above all the duty of faithful prayer. If we take our Lord's teaching as our guide, we know that prayer is the infallible means for knowing God's will, and for acquiring help to do it—the means, that is, for obtaining light and receiving strength. Every man needs prayer for guidance in choosing a partner for life, and for the grace of faithfulness to her and of loyal love. Every girl who lives by Christian principle will ask for God's guidance in giving her the affection of a good man, and in accepting and using that affection well. The romance of young hearts is a very real thing. It is a gift of God. There is a brightness in young love like the breaking of dawn, or the breathing of fresh breezes, or the opening of the flowers of spring. This is God's gift. The Christian religion, and that only, will keep this pure, and true, and strong, and will make it the precursor of a really noble and a really happy married life. Much of this must depend upon prayer.

A faithful manly Christian life in early days, in which the young learn high and noble thoughts, respect

<sup>1</sup> Gen. ii. 18.



for woman, the sacredness of their manhood, the duty of self-conquest and self-government, the habit of faithful communion and prayer, is the best preparation for choosing well and wisely in married life. Women when young have to learn sweetness, modesty, self-respect, and that kindly naturalness and considerateness for others which hinder them from repelling a good man's love. Each must help the other. A life of gentleness, sweetness, and goodness depends much upon the bright, pure, happy intercourse of the young. A woman may well learn young that no better gift can be offered her than a good man's love, no higher homage paid her by him than his wish that she should be the mother of his children. A man may well learn young that much of his education of character and growth in goodness must depend upon his association with a good woman; that respect for woman is a trait of nobility in true manliness; that the love of a high-minded girl and the gift of a good wife are among God's choicest blessings for those who love Him. In this certainly, a wise preparation for holy and happy marriage is a Christian life and faithful prayer.

We are taught in Holy Scripture to cast all our care upon God, 'for He careth for' us.<sup>1</sup> We are taught to 'delight . . . in the Lord, and He shall give' us our 'heart's desire.' We are taught to 'commit' our 'way unto the Lord, and put' our 'trust in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.'<sup>2</sup> We are taught 'in everything by prayer and supplication' to make our requests known unto God, and that His 'peace shall keep' our 'hearts.'<sup>3</sup> Our Lord insists on the duty of always praying and never giving in.<sup>4</sup> He implies that there is special power

<sup>1</sup> I S. Peter v. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xxxvii. 4, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. iv. 6, 7.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., S. Luke xviii. 1-8.

in besieging God's throne and in persevering in prayer. God seems to love to be taken into our confidence, so to speak, on all that most concerns us; and the mysterious force of prayer is more far-reaching than we can well know. What can be of greater concern than the choice of one to travel as a companion with us on life's journey, to be the father or the mother of our children? If men rightly pray as to the special vocation for the ministry; if women rightly pray as to their call to a religious life, a life of special service to God and to their fellow-creatures, surely the young should be taught that so grave and holy a question as marriage should form a subject in their intimate intercourse with God in prayer.

(4) It should always be remembered that marriage, above all, should be a relation of mutual affection and entire confidence. If this is to be, the heart of a Christian cannot suffer itself to be guided simply by a sudden fancy or passion. There should be, in ordinary cases, some congeniality of natural temperament. There are good men and good women who, from an utter want of such suitability, never can be happy together. Their way of looking at things, their tastes, their inclinations, are so widely different, or even opposed, that sympathy cannot exist, and without sympathy true harmony of hearts would seem to be impossible. Usually, too, nearness in age to one another would seem wise. The tastes of youth are not the tastes of age; and those who are to be, in the truest sense, companions on the journey of life, would, ordinarily speaking, seem more likely to be assured of happiness in passing along the path of trial hand in hand from youth to age. The same may be said, ordinarily speaking, of a similarity

in social condition. Any disproportion in this is likely to lead to unhappiness. Instances, doubtless, have been known to the contrary. The probability, however, is the other way. Such marriages have generally arisen either from some passing gust of passion, or from some preconceived social theory. In the one case, when the passion is past, there is felt to be no real and deep foundation for union ; in the other, even where goodness and respect preserve real faithfulness, there is likely to be felt a want of some of those qualities, or that training needed for thorough companionship in the journey of life.

Such would, perhaps, appear to be some of those preparations of life and character for the state of Holy Marriage which are according to the teachings of Christianity.

The nearer preparation is a thing not to be forgotten in the instruction of Christians immediately or shortly before their marriage.

In all things the motive and intention is of the gravest importance. To purify our intentions by faith, and by exercises of prayer and meditation, is a Christian duty. The intention of the young before their marriage should be directed to the fulfilment of the Divine intention, as the Church teaches. They should pray for a pure intention to carry out God's will. We know that His will is for the happy society of man and woman. It is God Himself who has said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone,'<sup>1</sup> and who has given woman to be with him. True marriage implies a pure intention to be a partner in a loving society. There should be the honest intention of real and faithful love,

<sup>1</sup> Gen. ii. 18.



of kindness, and sympathy, and consideration, of willingness to share the burdens, and brighten the joys, and soothe the sorrows which are inseparable, in some degree, from mortal life. Such a true intention, offered to God with a sincere heart, is, as we know, according to God's will, and must bring down grace and blessing. Honest intentions, formed by frail and fallen beings, may not be always and completely fulfilled, but they are the forecast and help towards a general fulfilment; and even though acts of contrition may be needed at times after the best intentions, still those intentions are not lost, but—it may be in penitence, it must be by prayer—are brought to real completion in the main. To approach the great Sacrament of Marriage with such a rightly formed intention is to prepare, so far forth, for a happy married life.

Holy Marriage is intended by God as His way for the birth of children into this world, who are to be baptized into the Christian Church, and brought up in the faith and fear of God. There should be the intention, before marriage, to have children, if it please God to give them, and to take pains to bring them up as good Christians. Married persons should pray for grace and guidance to exercise that rational self-restraint by which alone—in distinction from the morally shameful and physically harmful practices which have marked effete heathen civilisations and have been re-introduced in our own time and country—either Christian faith or human refinement can aim at prudence in the number of children born; and before marriage, it is right for them to look forward to finding, if such be the will of God, one of the chief joys of the married state in the lives which, under God, are derived from them.

And marriage is intended, so the Church reminds us, to prevent temptations to sin. 'The will of God' is our 'sanctification,'<sup>1</sup> and marriage should be entered upon with a pure intention of entire faithfulness of each to the other, that each, in holy love, may be the means to the other of that sanctification which is according to God's will. There may be thus a pure and lofty intention to raise human life nearer the Divine Ideal, to remember its sacredness, and to act so that in this mysterious and blessed relation it may be wholly sanctified.

Life, indeed, is brightened and blessed by love. God is Love. And such intentions are, in fact, intentions—fortified and purified by prayer—that true and faithful love may exalt and ennoble the married relation.

But further it is to be remembered, that as Holy Marriage is a very different thing in the case of Christians from what it was before the Incarnation; as it is now, as we have seen in former chapters, not only a contract and a relation, but a true sacramental union, so it should be approached in a truly Christian way.

The truly Christian way is with a cleansed conscience. Those who approach their marriage day do well to examine themselves, to make their confession in true penitence and receive Absolution. Then with a conscience really 'void of offence,' they will go to a fresh start in life, to receive God's great gift and blessing in their marriage.

It is well, too, if it be possible, to follow the Church's teaching and receive together 'the Bread of Life' and 'the Cup of Salvation.' Sometimes it is possible in

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 3.

conjunction with the marriage ceremony. More often it is more possible and edifying in existing circumstances to receive together in the early morning of the wedding day, and so with loving hearts and pure intentions to offer the great 'Sacrifice of our Ransom,' and themselves, their souls and bodies, as the Church teaches, to Him 'who giveth all.' So are intentions strengthened and purified, and hearts bound together in holy love. And then the young should be taught that their marriage day is, indeed, a day of the deepest joy, but also a day of holy solemnity. Before it some time should be saved from the rush of preparation necessary as regards external things for quiet meditation and earnest prayer. The 'I will' spoken by each in answer to the solemn question of the priest is an irrevocable vow registered in heaven, to be fulfilled with utter faithfulness. That fulfilment is possible by Divine Grace, and brings with it unspeakable happiness, but true piety points to the necessity of serious meditation and prayer before the taking of such a vow. The ring, given and received, is the 'token and pledge' of an indissoluble bond. That bond overshadowed and ennobled by love is indeed a bond of blessedness; but before entering into it, there may well be meditation and prayer. It is God Himself who joins hearts and hands. It is God who is present, by the mouth of His priest, to give the blessing. Surely it is well in preparation for so happy but so holy a moment to be prepared by meditation and prayer.

If to be in Christ is the 'new creature,'<sup>1</sup> then the holding fast to, and strengthening our place in that 'new creature,' is a duty and a blessing at such a time.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.



Life is full of mystery and sorrow. Life also may be full of joy. The joy is God's gift—the real joy—if in all things we seek to serve Him. The sorrow is changed into joy, and the mystery made into a foretaste of Heaven, by His blessing sought, and therefore found, on the divinest gift which He has given us—human love.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE RELIGIOUS ASPECT OF MARRIED LIFE

THE Family as conceived by the Christian Church has been truly said to reflect some of the mysteries and mysterious attributes of the Life of God. The authority of the father gains its sanctity and impressiveness from the authority of the Father of us all. The relationship of the Christian child to his father recalls the nature and character of the Eternal Son. The mother has been called 'the focus of love' in each human family, in whose affection father and child find a stimulus to, and tie between, their own. It is thus that the love of her, who is wife and mother, recalls and reflects the Holy Spirit, who is the Eternal Bond of the love of the Father and the Son. In the Incarnation, in the sacred home of Nazareth, family life took a fresh beginning; and always in the history of Christendom, as we have already noticed, the welfare of the Church and the nation has depended upon this life being pure and right. Attention has been called to the fact that S. Paul, at the close of his Epistles—no matter how lofty may have been the theological themes of which he has been treating in them—thinks over 'the families, or members of families, who go to form, in their entirety, each local Church. "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus. . . . Likewise greet the Church

that is in their house. . . . Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us. Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. . . . Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household. Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord. Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa. . . . Salute the beloved Persis. . . . Salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them. Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them."<sup>1</sup> What a wealth of pure affection is here stored up in these Christian families, thus recognised and respected by the great Apostle !'

Nothing can be more important, then, than to keep before the mind the religious aspect of family life. We learn true lessons on this subject from finding how literature, even outside Christianity, teaches us that it must be so. The clear conditions of our existence have struck all nations, and the greatest nations; and men have been forced to look outside and beyond themselves in order to understand what they are. In modern times, Positive philosophers, like M. Comte and his followers, have imagined that the mythology of the Greek and Roman worlds merely arose from trying to account for the phenomena of external nature. According to this theory, the human race was in its infancy, and gave a theological account of everything. Instead of investigating what are called 'natural causes' for storms, tempests, hurricanes,

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xvi. 3-15.



volcanoes, and so on, they imagined a god who managed each of these things. The mythology of the most cultivated races, the Greeks and the Romans, probably arose from nothing of the kind. It arose from the contemplation of the actual conditions in which men found themselves. When they woke up to life, they discovered that there had been an author of their being, a cause, a parent, who gave the first spring to their existence. They found themselves in the relations of father, mother, husband, wife, child, sister, brother. These were deep and true things that could not be got rid of. They felt that they came from powers beyond themselves. Their minds were carried back to ancestors, and hence carried back further to Divine beings. These Divine beings they thought of—it may be grotesquely for want of a fuller revelation—as real persons; and whether they managed winds, or waves, or the rising of the sun, the thing that was most important about them was, that human relations came from them, that they busied themselves about human interests, and hence they were thought of as having in some sort family and social relations.

It has been profoundly remarked that whilst the hymns of the Veda are striking and interesting, they never can supplant, in the affections of cultivated man, the Homeric poems, or the great masterpieces of Greek Art; and for this reason, that whilst the former deal chiefly with the energies of nature, such as winds, and clouds, and tempests, the latter come much nearer home and go much deeper down, as they touch the fundamental relations of human beings to one another, and to the gods. They remind us, in fact, that mankind finds it difficult to forget the religious aspect of

family life. It is very striking how strongly this took hold of the Greek mind. It is no proof of a mere theological infancy of thought, to which has succeeded the higher Positive conception. On the contrary, it reminds us that the much vaunted Positive conception is no mark of progress, but rather of deep degeneracy; and for this reason. For men to imagine that their wisdom, their power, their knowledge, their courage, are all their own, and come to them from external things which they observe, instead of coming to them from higher powers, and being developed in proportion to their faithfulness to the laws revealed by those powers—is a degeneracy, for it is a failure in loyalty to truth.

The temptation to that failure, of course, has come, and comes to all men; to imagine that we are utterly independent, that we can stand alone, that our ‘gifts’ are not ‘gifts,’ but possessions by right, is, and always has been, the temptation of human pride. The Greeks felt profoundly that the courage and greatness of their heroes came to them from higher sources, from others and great ones who possessed such powers; they acknowledge high sources for their gifts; they felt that they were not independent, but awoke up in this world in relations, which could not be shaken off, nor treated lightly. The evil disregard of such thoughts and facts was rebuked again and again in Greek poetry, and their greatest tragedies turned upon the certain punishment coming upon such disregard. Their eyes were wide open to the religious aspect of family life, at least in so far as this; that they felt that ‘domestic relations were in some sense Divine relations.’

It is equally true that among the Romans the same

thing was felt, though with a difference. In later and sceptical times, in the Republic and in the Empire, the gods were mere names, and the ancient beliefs in their personal power had gone. It was not so, however, in earlier and more simple days. Nothing among the Romans was held to be more sacred than the authority of the father, and they truly believed in fatherly authority being a Divine function exercised by the gods. In their whole household life too, in those earlier days, the Penates or household gods were deeply respected. They believed that Divine care was exercised for the household; and their religion was then a religion closely connected with the family. It is quite true, therefore, that in the case both of the Latins and of the Greeks 'we are forced to the conclusion that their apprehensions of the Divine arose from no study of the external world—its blessings or its curses, its fixed forms or its incessant changes—but from the human relationships in which the inhabitants of each country found themselves. That relation, of which they most realised the worth, was that which linked itself most directly to the belief of a Divine relation which corresponded to it, of some Divine person who had appointed it and could uphold it.'<sup>1</sup> It is striking how in this way they learnt from family relations their conceptions of Divine persons; and so, out of the very necessities of things, surrounded their home life with the idea of religion.

In the case of the chosen people, the same is true, only that such things stood on a higher platform. 'The patriarchs have every thought of religion connected with the thought of the family. Abraham is 'called,'

<sup>1</sup> Maurice, *Social Morality*, pp. 114, 115.



not by any hero or ancestor, but by One above him, his thoughts of whom are connected with the thoughts of his family. He is taught to look forward to those that shall come after him, and his most religious thoughts are connected with his relationship to others.<sup>1</sup> His God is the 'God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,' the 'God of all the families upon the earth.' The Greeks and the Romans had thoughts, we may almost call them revelations, of the unseen world through family relationships. The Hebrews felt the sanctity of the family from the revelation of the God who had appointed it. No interest is really so great as the moral interest of things, because we are sure that there is an order in the world, not merely the physical order which governs the material creation, but the moral order, which warns us of the true relations of human beings to one another. This moral order is especially revealed in the necessary family relations, and it leads men to the thought of a God of order, to whom worship is due.

History shows us that that worship had a very early connection with the family. In the stories of sacrifice such as that of Iphigenia and that of Isaac, whatever else may be said of them, this is certainly true, that they indicate how much more precious the offering of the child was than any other offering, and they enable us 'to understand by what practical methods the belief that a living sacrifice is of more worth than a dead one may have been imparted'<sup>2</sup> to men in the past. In fact, the more we study history, the more we find that in the very nature of things, religion connects itself closely

<sup>1</sup> See, *e.g.*, Gen. xvii. 1-8.

<sup>2</sup> Maurice, *Social Morality*, p. 119.

with family life; and that in so far as it ceases to do so, we are not advancing higher out of a 'theological period'—as M. Comte would have us believe—to a nobler strain of thought, but, on the contrary, sinking down into what is less human, and also less Divine.

If family life, then, is to be right and at its best, it must be connected with religion. Here we see again how important is faithfulness to the Divine appointment of the indissolubility of marriage. Religious life in the family must at once be shaken if the very basis of the family be reduced to the level of a merely legal contract, invented by man-made law, and by man-made law destroyed in accordance with human caprice or sin. If this foundation is sure, then there is a true, religious ground for the bringing up of children. In the first place, there will be the almost necessary consequences of immediate, natural affection; the child in its opening consciousness feels itself dependent upon its parents. If those parents, in any ordinary degree, exercise their responsible office rightly, that sense of dependence becomes deeply affectionate. The affection takes its colour from the exact relationship towards the father; it is solemnised and exalted by the sense of authority. The filial relation is a thing felt, and it produces a special *ethos*, or manner; there will be affection, together with obedience and respect. In the relation to the mother there is felt an affection coloured and exalted by her relation to the child, as 'the mother who bare him.' Where parents work together with the true affection and mutual assistance which is implied and taught in the indissoluble tie of marriage, the mother's influence softens, while it strengthens, the father's authority. It helps to

make that authority a thing loved and respected by the child; and it has been truly observed, that when the father and mother are not to each other what they ought to be, there is sure to follow some consequent disorder in home-life, which is itself a witness of the deep and religious character attaching to that life. As the child grows older and is more conscious of things, and more capable of thinking about them, this affectionate relationship to, and dependence upon, its parents, leads of necessity to a certain religiousness of character. The voice of conscience within it corresponds to the atmosphere of home-life around it. It half consciously, and then with increasing consciousness, finds that it depends upon higher powers and loving powers. It becomes dimly conscious of a tie between it, itself, and the unseen. It has, in fact, a religion. For religion, we know, means—in one of its aspects—the necessary tie between the soul and God, and the sense of that tie; and thus it is that home-life—where it is at all what it ought to be—by its ordinary conditions teaches religion. The young who have drunk in, from the earliest relations in which they are placed in the world, a sense of responsive affection towards authority and tenderness, cannot be in character blasphemous or profane.

But besides this, there is a further teaching of religion, by the very necessary order of a family, in which family life is at all what it ought to be.

That life brings before the young the ideal. Few things are more necessary for human nature than this. If we are doing right; if there is in us—as there is, in some degree, in almost all—the desire, and even ambition, to be better, the soul must have before it



some ideal towards which to work. That ideal is necessarily placed before the young in some measure by the conditions of family life. How much this is generally felt is shown by the way in which the most unbelieving philosophies speak of it. Hegel teaches that the *Idea* is God, and Humanity is the Christ. Strauss pretends that his teaching restores to the believer 'all that he might think was lost by the destructive mythical process applied to the life of Jesus and—which is to him most sacred—"the boundless treasure of truth and life, which for eighteen hundred years past has nourished humanity," and has united earth and heaven.' He does this by removing religion altogether from a historical basis to what he considers a scientific basis, and so professes to bring religion into unity with the highest philosophic truth. He even speaks in high praise of 'the purifying and exalting conceptions which flow to the Church from the view of her Christ;' and while he proceeds to say—without any proof given—that the Christ of the Gospels cannot be true, he yet holds the value of an ideal, such as that which the Church presents to us in our Lord. Strangely enough, whilst he does not believe in the necessity of a historical exemplar, he teaches the need of some ideal; and thinks that while sinful men may not be able to create such for themselves in absolute perfection, they are able to create what is useful, and that more enlightened ages fill out the sketch, and that then as time goes on, men become so well disposed towards it that they can discover no flaw in it. The absurdity of all this is plain when we remember how truly it has been pointed out that it means (1) that an age like the first age, whose views, prejudices, and sins were all sternly opposed

by the Christian Exemplar—an age which did not know the Light when it came to it, and persecuted that Light, and which, in proportion as it learnt to know the Light, was utterly revolutionised by it—was an age which itself invented the Light; in other words, that the first age created the Christ out of its own imagination, and then revolutionised itself by its own creation; and (2) that as time went on, the world became so partial to the idea of the Christ, that it was unable to discover any imperfection in that idea. The fact is ignored here, that such men as Voltaire, Paine, and all the other angry critics of Christianity actually existed: but the point important to us now is, how deeply mankind feels the need of an ideal, when so root-and-branch an unbeliever as Strauss clings to it with such pertinacity that he can seriously teach that there was no really historical Jesus, but that a depraved and ignorant age created the idea of Him, as their ideal, and that later ages could find no flaw in the notion.

The existence of the Ideal, then, for the young, is of the highest importance. That Ideal, Christianity teaches, is not created for them at all, but it is revealed in the life and character of our Lord. One of the most important things in the religious aspect of the Christian home is, that it keeps this Ideal presented to the mind—not merely by direct Christian teaching, but—by the steady influence of high thoughts and high purposes and lives aiming at consistency, which have been formed by the Church's teaching of Christ. To a certain extent, the ideal of duty, and conduct, and the general government of life, varies in the sexes: the remarkable thing about our Blessed Lord is, that He combined in

Himself in tone and conduct the Ideal of both man and woman. The faithful performance of the ordinary duties of parents towards their children develop these ideals more and more, from tender years onwards. In addition to this, home-life leads the soul from the area of immediate affection to wide thoughts of relationship to others, and duties to humanity at large. From the earliest days, also, Christian parents, not only by their own example, but also by their teaching; and not only by their teaching, but by their exercised relation to their children, lead the young to eager and reverent thoughts of God.

It is thus that a religious home implants in the young the valuable possession of principles—those moral guiding lines which belong to all conditions and ages of life. Thus also it helps the young, at first scarcely consciously, to feel the duty of self-culture and self-government. Truly religious home-life clears away from the mind the foolish fallacies which men so often cling to, as to things being right and blameless because they are natural. As external nature left to itself would very soon be a wilderness of weeds, so the discipline, affection, and regulated wisdom, and religious tone of home, make it clear to the mind that human nature without such cultivation would become ruinous and even destructive.

All such teachings, however, and all such influences must depend upon religion for strength and protection. Christian parents recognise how certainly it is their duty to teach their children early the practice of prayer: this can be taught, just because the soul is made for God, and needs God; and the love and care of parents leads naturally to a recognition of the



Father of us all. Fallen man, whether young or old, may at times find prayer irksome. None the less, there is an instinctive need to go forth from the narrow circle of life and of 'things seen' to intercourse with the Unseen; and it is part of the religious office of a Christian home to train and discipline and develop this need of the soul by the exercise of prayer. From that, easily and naturally follows the good practice of united family prayer. A father, by his fatherhood, has for his family and household something of the priestly office; and in a religious family, united prayers and intercessions are both a duty towards God, and a suitable outcome of the idea of family and household relations, which are made by God's appointment. Some teaching of distinct and necessary Christian truth is part of the duty of those in authority in a family. Our own Church Catechism may be difficult for a child at first to understand, but it is a most valuable synopsis of Christian truth, on which parents and teachers do well to form their line of teaching. Sometimes there has been an inclination to find fault with the custom of teaching children their Catechism by heart. It is true that they cannot fully understand it when they learn it in early years, but it is a good basis to go upon, and admits of easy explanation suited to the different ages of those who are taught; and its very phrases, mastered and known in early days, are often remembered in later life in a way in which things learnt in later years are not remembered, and become illuminated to the mind of the soul by the gradual teachings of the Church.

At the root of the efforts of Christian parents must always be the sense that their baptized children are God's children, lent to them to train as useful and

happy citizens of the kingdom of heaven while here in this life, so that they may be such also in the world to come.

All this religion of home leads naturally to teach the young early their place in the Church of Christ, and the duty of the public worship of God. Unfortunately in later times, a notion has prevailed in some quarters that the baptized children of God should not be allowed to take their part in the one Service their Saviour ordained, the 'Church's great prayer-meeting,' the presentation before God of the one Sacrifice for our sins. It is important to teach baptized children the duty of 'Keeping Sunday' by, above all things, being devoutly present at the Service of the Eucharist. This has the happy effect (1) of teaching young children their real place in the family of God; (2) of forming early a devout habit of Christian worship, which will often cling through life to a soul, to its great benefit; (3) of preparing the young minds for the fuller privilege of Communion in the Body and Blood of Christ, by giving a thorough knowledge of the Church's Service, and teaching them to look forward to the completed privilege of a Christian. That children should be present at the Eucharistic Service has been the practice of the whole Church, except in later times among ourselves. And the Church of England would appear in her teaching to be at one with the rest of the Catholic Church in this particular, both by the sacredness which she attaches to childhood in her baptismal teachings, and also because she gives no encouragement to her people to leave in the middle of the Celebration of the Eucharist, while she appoints that Service as the one in which there is to be a sermon,

and urges upon godparents the duty of the young 'to hear sermons.'

Home, founded according to Divine revelation on the indissoluble union of man and woman, ought then to be religious; and is, in fact—wherever Christian effort is made to follow God's teaching in the Christian Church—the noblest teacher and guide and support of true religion, and the worship which man owes to God.



## CHAPTER XX

### THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF MARRIED LIFE

IN regarding the family as the real unit of society, we have seen that human beings do not find themselves in the world as merely lonely individuals; but that, on the contrary, they are in some sense necessarily bound to others, in some sense in a family—that they must have a father and a mother.

If the family be in accordance with God's appointment, if the indissoluble tie of marriage be recognised, if the parents in any sense fulfil their functions, then the relation of family life of necessity suggests and teaches those religious relations to God, the recognition of which differentiates the religious character from other characters. In other words, there is, as we have seen, a religious aspect of married life. There is also a social teaching coming from the same.

It is important to consider this thoughtfully, for there are efforts made to separate social and religious obligations. It is true that social duties are sometimes fulfilled, and with considerable usefulness, by those who unhappily do not know or do not accept the dogmatic teaching of Christianity. It must be remembered, however, that such persons have grown up in the midst of Christian communities; that

they have imbibed Christian traditions; that they have breathed a Christian atmosphere. It is also true that in all times those who have desired to do right have not been left without Divine guidance; for we know that the Eternal Word is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.<sup>1</sup> None the less, Christians believe that social morality is only thoroughly secure when it rests on a religious basis, and that its truest lessons are to be learnt by those who recognise the real place of the family, and the Divine institution of the indissoluble union of man and woman in marriage. Indeed, there are not wanting indications, even among Christian people, that when the hold on these truths becomes loose—as it does unhappily more and more in our own time—and when Church-people in any way falter in bearing the Church's faithful witness as to the marriage bond, many social questions take their guidance from sentimentality instead of principle, and positive duties are neglected, or misstatements and confusions arise about them, under cover of a somewhat shallow religionism. If we take family life in its true sense as a guide and instructor, there are certain important social questions which become illuminated by it.

(1) From 'it we learn what the Catechism calls 'My duty towards my neighbour.' As boys and girls grow up in a family, naturally and necessarily their interests extend beyond the circle of home. At first parents will be entirely their guides, and children will rightly depend upon them. The object of true education will be for the parent to teach children when grown up to be men and women, to be independent in the

<sup>1</sup> S. John i. 9.

right sense. The more parents recognise this, that they are training those who are to be men and women, not to be children for ever, but to take their own part in the battle of life, and to be themselves centres of fresh homes or fresh circles of influence, the more will the tie between them be drawn close, and the members of the family will all the more be their children in after days. The young learn that there are other families besides their own, with customs and ways peculiar to them, just as their family has had its own customs and ways. They learn that there are others, in fact, brought up more or less as they are brought up. They learn neighbourliness. Our Lord, as we remember, was asked the question, 'Who is my neighbour?'<sup>1</sup> We know that He answered it by throwing the questioner back on the thought of his own condition, and his own surroundings and necessities, and teaching him thus to think of the condition, the surroundings, and necessities of others. This is what family life—by Divine appointment—is intended to do. It teaches the sanctity of home, the dignity of the relations of home, the sacredness of human affection, the intercommunication of kindly offices and acts of self-denial. It does not teach mere narrowness, or what may be called corporate selfishness. The children are not children for ever. They carry with them in their independent lives those holy traditions, memories, and affections which have illuminated their lives in early days, and learn to apply them to others.

Our Lord Himself deigned to experience and sanctify family life in the home at Nazareth, and as part of His example, He showed us that the consequence of those

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke x. 29.



years of humble obedience and training was a life of self-devoted and active charity towards others; that, as we may say, whilst family love remained strong, it broadened out into the social temper and the fulfilment of neighbourly duties.

It has been well said with regard to His teaching in the parable of the Good Samaritan.<sup>1</sup> ‘The lawyer had asked, “Who is my neighbour?” This question of the lawyer is answered by a counter question which is put by our Lord. He, at the conclusion of His narrative, asks, “Which of the three—priest, Levite, Samaritan—was neighbour to the wounded man?” The lawyer meant, “Who has a just claim on my time, my affections, my purse?” Our Lord asks, “Who feels that his time, his purse, his compassion are due to others?” Observe, our Lord does not ask, “Was it priest, Levite, or Samaritan that thought the wounded man his neighbour?” He does ask, “Was it priest, Levite, or Samaritan that was neighbour to the wounded man?” and the word neighbour, He thus implies, involves reciprocal relationship. In order to find out what it means, a man ought to put himself in the place of another man, with the question, “Ought this man to help me, I being in what is now his place, and he being in mine?” This is the practical meaning of the “as thyself.” Human self-love is to be the measure of Christian charity, and thus the neighbour of the parable is not, as we might have expected, the wounded Jew. The neighbour of the parable is the Samaritan who aided him, the Samaritan who sees in the wounded Jew only a wounded man, and who

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke x. 25-37.

feels that had he been the wounded man, the Jew ought to have helped him, and would have helped him too.’<sup>1</sup>

Now this is just one of those lessons which grows naturally and steadily from a good home. It is there that men and women learn to realise vividly their own individuality, and at the same time their relation to others, and so, to recognise in the right way the individual claims of others upon them. Fairness, considerateness, and large and generous views thus take possession of the mind, and so the teaching of family life reaches forth and expands and emphasises ‘my duty towards my neighbour.’

(2) Another teaching of social duty comes from the same source, viz., the duty to our country. It has been rather the fashion to disparage the virtue of patriotism. A malevolent influence, arising to a great extent in this country from the exigencies of party government, has tended to lead men in later times to disparage this very real virtue. In common with all virtues, it may be abused or lowered; but none the less, there has appeared to be, especially in more recent years, a certain wrong-headedness which has induced men to depreciate the claims of duty, and attempt to silence arguments in favour of our duty to our country. That duty is taught by Christianity. It has been well said, that ‘the tears and words of Jesus Christ’ in His lamentation over Jerusalem, were ‘the tears and words of a true patriot.’<sup>2</sup> In this connection it is worth while to quote a passage of great wisdom on this subject:—

<sup>1</sup> Liddon, reported in *Penny Pulpit*, Series ii. No. 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*, *Sermons on Some Words of Christ*, p. 244.

‘It is sometimes said that patriotism is an old-world virtue—that it belongs to barbarous ages, when men seldom or never travelled, and when the private and petty concerns of their own city, or tribe, or country, shut out from their minds and hearts the broad interests of the race. It is said that patriotism is to disappear and a new virtue, “cosmopolitanism,” is to take its place. This has an imposing sound; but let us be on our guard. What if this new and impossible virtue be but the pretext put forth by a culpable selfishness for neglecting plain public duties which lie close to our own doors? What if it be but a duplicate of that less disguised selfishness which relieves itself from the care of near relatives by pleading devotion to public business? Depend upon it, in the order of God’s providence, our interests, our enthusiasms, our loyalty, like our charity, should begin, although they should by no means end, at home. They should begin with the family, then gather round the country, then embrace the race. No, patriotism is not a decaying virtue, because the country, like the family, is a creation of God’s providence. It is not by chance that such and such races have been fused together occupying the same territory, governed by the same dynasty, the same laws, the same historical traditions; and as it is a sure sign of moral mischief when family affections and the sense of family duties are impaired, so it bodes no good when men think little of their country, and are unwilling to make sacrifices for her. May God save us English from this, which certainly was not among the errors of our forefathers! They may have been prejudiced, because they knew little



of any countries but their own. But, if we have learnt to do justice to others, let us not forget what is due to our own land and race. We have no reason to despise other nations; we have in truth much to learn from them; but the first homage of our hearts is due to the great country which gave us birth.’<sup>1</sup>

There is another passage in the same writer, which illustrates the same truth. In speaking of the fall of Solomon, he makes the following remarks:—‘Solomon was the victim of a sort of false cosmopolitanism. His wide range of interests, his immense empire, his contact with men of all and no creeds, brought to him a temptation which often comes to those who, from the nature of their duties, see many sides of human life. In such cases the difficulty is to be fair, just, generous to the convictions of others, without compromising what we ourselves know to be true—to recognise what is true in creeds, which are largely false, without also shutting our eyes to their substantial falsehood. Solomon’s sympathy with all forms of human thought and life would probably have gone hand in hand with his anxiety to promote and develop the world-wide commerce of his countrymen.’<sup>2</sup> However, in this case, barriers were broken down, and when they were broken down, gradually patriotism was lost, and false cosmopolitanism took its place, and ‘Solomon within the walls of his palace, amid the occupations of daily domestic life, breathed a heathen atmosphere, and it did its work upon him. . . . Carelessness became indiffer-

<sup>1</sup> Liddon, *Sermons on Some Words of Christ*, pp. 245, 246.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*, *Sermons on Old Testament Subjects*, p. 159.

ence ; indifference under pressure soon became virtual apostasy.'<sup>1</sup>

To learn the virtue of patriotism is of importance. The Christian family, stretching out into the sense of neighbourliness, and then into the teachings and trainings of an English school—is the great teacher of that lesson. True love of country makes us feel that there is a great *ethos* or manner or way of looking at things, which belongs to us, and rightly belongs to us, as citizens of a great country. It is surely true, that the more we recognise this fact and all that arises out of it, the more we learn to recognise the same thing, *mutatis mutandis*, in other nations. We learn to resist the temptation of wrong self-assertion ; to value our own ways, and so to respect other nations when they value theirs ; we learn much from them, and we believe that they may learn much from us, but we do not desire to destroy their peculiar *ethos*, any more than to allow them to destroy ours. It is a mark of a time which has grown slack in its respect for the indissolubility of marriage and the sacredness of family life, when men either exalt other nations at the expense of their own, or refuse to see that they have something to learn from others. Every individual belonging to the great collective mass which we call a nation, has learnt—if home be what it should be—to value the traditions of the past, and to anticipate the advances of the future ; and this they learn also with regard to their country. It is not wonderful, although it is deplorable, that France, from her sorrows and sufferings before the Revolution, as well as from her con-

<sup>1</sup> Liddon, *Sermons on Old Testament Subjects*, p. 160.

fusions and violences at the time of that tremendous catastrophe, should have greatly lost sight of true patriotism; asserting 'liberty, equality, fraternity,' in the most vehement manner, she has yet never learned their real meaning. Whilst there are excellent Frenchmen who would be just and truly patriotic, there has been a too prevalent idea in the nation that liberty means licence for self and intolerance for others. The consequence has been that revenge for wrongs, or supposed wrongs, and anger because of wounded vanity, has too often taken the place of real patriotism. And side by side with this, there is terrible and increasing immorality, and a serious want of the sense of the true reach and sanctity of marriage.

A truly Christian home is then socially valuable as a training-ground for the exercise of virtues which expand in widening circles to our neighbours, to our country, and to other nations.



## CHAPTER XXI

### THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF MARRIED LIFE—*continued*

WE have seen how the home life, which results from faithfulness to the Christian idea of marriage, widens out and is intended to widen out into a sense of 'my duty towards my neighbour,' and of national feeling and the virtue of patriotism.

There are some further considerations which are worthy to be noted in the same direction, and more in detail. In the Christian view of marriage, as we have seen, the bond is divinely ordained to be indissoluble. This of course is essential if the sanctity of life is kept in view; if there is a true recognition of man's duty to woman, and of what ought to be her special modesty of self-respect. It is this also which, when sternly recognised, places a barrier against mere human caprice; which keeps before the mind the mysterious solemnity surrounding marriage, and reminds mankind of their union with God. It further is intended to provide a stable basis on which family life, and all that is involved in family life, can rest, and it is—as we have seen—of the highest importance to national strength and the right fulfilment of

social duty that this solemn condition of Christian marriage should be firmly adhered to.

The following points require to be considered as emphasising the important consequences of rightly regulated relations between man and woman in the far wider sphere of social and national duty:—

(1) The rightly ordered Christian home—it will be acknowledged even by those who do not recognise the Christian ideal—is the best possible training-ground for the affections. Human affections may sink to the lowest or rise to the highest, and as the play of the affections creates the most intense sense of happiness in human life, it is of the greatest importance that they should have a true training. Marriage is a relation into which man and woman enter. The consequences of it in the birth of children are that the young find themselves in necessary relations, and awaken gradually to the fact that those relations are altogether consistent with the Will of God. There is, as we know, a special manner or *ethos* or temper which attaches in any Christian home especially—which indeed attaches always more or less to the lives of human beings, even where Christianity is not obeyed—a special manner belonging to the relation of parent and child, of brothers and sisters, and to the family generally. If the Christian ideal is recognised—however, through human infirmity, imperfectly carried out—all this is brought under the power of the teaching of Christ. The general result is that the young are at first unconsciously and then consciously breathing an atmosphere of that which is put highest in Christian morality, viz., divine charity. The home is likely to teach charity in its true sense.

In an advanced state of civilisation, and under the social conditions of modern life, there is a danger of sentiment and human benevolence taking the place of the charity which the Christian Church is meant to spread. Charity is no easy good-nature which puts aside all thoughts of the gravity of wrongdoing, and has little regard to the meaning and consequences of evil. It is a deeper and a larger temper than that. Anything which deserves the name must have some resemblance to the essential characteristic of God which is revealed to us in Christ. No one of the family of man has ever been more tender, gentle, considerate, towards the weak and frail than Jesus Christ. No one has ever been more ready to put up with slights and injuries, to make large allowances, and Himself to suffer intensely in consequence. No one, at the same time, has been more scathing in his denunciations of high-handed and determined iniquity and injustice. The lips of Christ which uttered the sweetest and most consoling words ever addressed to fallen man also uttered words of the most frightful severity. Divine charity as it is depicted by His Apostle as a virtue to be cultivated by each individual soul cannot include indifference to what is wrong; it cannot mean a mere easy good-nature.

Now, the atmosphere of a Christian home includes the element of duty. That charity which it teaches by the very relations in which the various members necessarily stand to each other, always takes for granted and inculcates not mere sentiment, but a very real sense of duty and recognition of right and wrong. It brings divine love in its strength and tenderness, in its reality, and therefore its condemna-



tion of what is wrong, into close union with human life. In the home, above all, we gradually learn that divine love or charity is 'no longer a barren tenet or sentiment,' and that human life is very far from being a hopeless struggle.

It is thus that this training leads us from our earliest years, half unconsciously at first, to think more truly of what God is and what we are—to think of God with a solemn and awful sense of His Greatness and Fatherliness, to think of the real danger to ourselves and to others of sinning against that true and perfect charity. The Christian home, as we have already seen, is the place where in various ways we are gradually instructed in the teachings and serious claims of the Bible and the Church. 'Take away the Love of God, and you take away everything. The Bible sets forth the revelation of that Love, or it is good for nothing. The Church is the living witness of the Revelation of that Love, or it is good for nothing.' We learn in the Christian home, when that home is guided by the teaching of the Church, not to represent God in any way that is at variance with this. We learn that divine charity cannot tolerate the permanent pursuit of evil. We learn that, somehow or other—for we do not enter into that question now—the world is filled with disorders. We learn that unless we are trained in a true exercise of the affections we shall only add to those disorders. We learn that benevolence is a good thing, that sanitary and social and political reformations are good things, but we gradually learn that these are not all; that excellent as they are, we have to go deeper; that a kindliness which may prompt them

would be insufficient in the long-run, and even sometimes lead to disaster; we learn that the Ruler of the Universe is deeply interested in the state of our world, and that—however the disorders came about—He has been and is intervening, by the Coming of His Son revealing the Father's charity, by the work of the Spirit bringing that charity more into the souls of men, to correct these disorders. It has been said, and with considerable truth, that if we are taught to think of God as One who allows men to be comfortable each in his own way if he can, who is never angry with them, *i.e.* who has no side of holiness in its relation to sin (which I understand is the meaning of God's anger), as a being who would wish indeed that all men should be as happy as they can, and to make others as happy as they can, but who leaves them entirely to their own ways, indifferent whether they act rightly or not—such a view does very well for atheism, because one can just as easily think of the world without such a being as with him. Now, the teaching of the Christian home gradually leads us by the sense of relative duties, always enwrapped in love, to feel that a God of this kind is impossible to a Christian. And the moment that we learn in any adequate sense the place and regulation of the affections, that moment we learn at least something of the nature of our Father in Heaven, and therefore something of the meaning of that charity which is to be exercised in our lives. Thus the home trains for action in the larger field of social duty, national duty, human duty, in which those who once were children have to take their place when they grow to manhood or womanhood.

(2) And again, the Christian home is important as a training-ground for that which is so necessary in the wider circles of life. It is a training-ground in a sense of obligation to law and order. In after life we wake up to the fact that we are ourselves, each one of us, under a law. In proportion as that is recognised, in that proportion can a civilised community work well; in that proportion can a nation be a great nation. The child has been used to the commands of its mother or its nurse. The boy has been used to the commands of his father. He feels the dignity of authority. He recognises, almost before he has learnt the fifth commandment, that any one who is the author of life in any sense to him has that solemn relation to him which implies obedience to authority. He obeys naturally, not because he is absolutely compelled to obey always. When force is applied, force naturally calls out the idea of resistance, but in the training of home parental authority has quite another meaning to him. There is a power that he recognises, that he submits to, and feels that in submitting he is showing self-respect as well as right reverence, that he is acting not the part of a slave but the part of a manly and self-controlled son. The boy becomes a man, and he is conscious of the fact that there is a power over him in his country more impalpable but still binding upon him. The man does not always argue as to who made the law or how it came about that it was made—although as a free citizen he learns at times to criticise these points—but, broadly speaking, he has a sense of being under a law, and that he has learnt the meaning of authority, and therefore that law is a sacred thing and must be



obeyed. He has learnt the temper which realises individual obligation. He has learnt to know that even those who enforce law—wherever law is exercised rightly—are themselves bound by the law as much as he is. It is not the mere consideration that the breach of law entails punishment, and that the law in that way is stronger than the individual. If that were all, it would not mean that the man was a free and law-abiding man, but that he was a cringing and cowardly slave. The Christian home has taught him to be nothing of the kind, but to have the law-abiding temper which recognises the sanctity of authority. He has been brought up in fact with a deep sense of those relations which come from the necessity of things as established by God. He finds that the law cannot change those relations. The law cannot give dignity to fatherhood or to motherhood, or create affections, or add anything to the warmth of feelings which bind human beings together in the various relations of life. What the law does is this: ‘the law stamps an obligation upon the relation.’ No law can form the union of man and woman in marriage. No law can break that union. What it does is, it takes under its protection those conditions in which we find ourselves, and those relations which God has appointed among human beings. It is thus that a Christian home trains the boy or girl gradually to a sense of the sanctity of law, and to a law-abiding temper. It is thus that it trains them to feel a horror of unjust or wicked laws, just because these violate the dignity of law. Our Blessed Lord Himself pointed out the sanctity of law, and the dreadful sin of the misuse of so sacred a thing, when He reminded Pilate

of this : ‘Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above : *therefore* he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.’<sup>1</sup> The point, however, on which we should dwell—without going further into the mystery and sacred origin of law—is in short this : that no nation can be properly civilised or great without some serious sense of that sanctity, and thus one valuable consequence of the training of a Christian home, and of respect for Christian marriage, is that the young gradually and naturally learn that sense of obligation which is essential for their fulfilling afterwards the duties of good citizens.

(3) Again, the Christian home is the best training-ground for public life afterwards, because it inculcates necessarily the importance of the virtue of truth. It is in the home that the child first learns to speak what one calls its native language. And gradually, and at first only half consciously, it learns the morality of language. Language, as we know, is one of the greatest gifts of God. No oppression is felt to be more heavy or more cruel than an attempt on the part of tyrannical government to ostracise the use of the native tongue. In modern times nothing has more commended the justice and right principle of our colonial system than the determination not to inflict this ostracism upon British subjects who yet speak naturally their own language. Nothing probably, in quite recent days, has brought home to the minds of our people the sense of injustice and wrong more than the efforts made in the Transvaal to ostracise the English language. Language is felt to be a serious and mysterious gift, and the right use

<sup>1</sup> S. John xix. 11.

of it runs very close to learning the virtue of truth. It is in a Christian home that, by the necessary order of things, and in the recognition of the true relation of one member of the family to another, truthfulness is taught. This is of the first importance to the individual. There is 'a priceless value of truthfulness in the soul's life. No advantages whatever, whether of mind, body, or estate, can counterbalance the misery of indifference to truth. No faults, however grave, are irreparable, when the soul still clings to a love of truth. Truthfulness is the basis of all other natural virtues in the soul; it is the basis of all true religion. Courage, justice, temperance, what are these but products of the sense of truth, dictating the forms of virtuous effort which are required by different circumstances? It is the sense of truth, no less than the Apostle, which tells us that "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."<sup>1</sup> It is the sense of truth which bids us pray for God's pardoning mercy in Christ Jesus—we know what we are as sinners. It is the sense of truth which leads us to seek God's grace by His Holy Spirit in His Sacraments—we know our weakness when left to ourselves. Truth is the one condition of all moral and religious progress. It were indeed better, in the old Greek phrase, even to perish in the light rather than to miss truth; but, as matters stand, we Christians know that "if we walk in the light, as [God] is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 S. John i. 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> 1 S. John i. 7.



Truthfulness, then, is of the first importance to every individual soul, and it is a virtue which is necessarily helped forward by the training of a Christian home.

That training, however, goes much further. It prepares children for acting truly in the larger relations, social and national, in which they find themselves when they become men or women. Society in any true sense cannot really go on without the existence of confidence. Wherever that fails, there is inevitably social sin. If we cannot place confidence in one another, or in the general lines of action on which society moves and on which our rulers govern, then there must follow misery, revolution, rebellion. It has been said that confidence is the venture which every human being has to make in dealing with other human beings around him. We all, in the last resort, must commit our ways and destinies to God and His keeping, but our fellow-men have a sort of share in that high privilege of God when they necessarily receive our confidence. When it is discovered that confidence has been misplaced, right-minded men, whether in private or in public life, receive a shock. It is necessary for the existence of civilised society, for carrying on rightly the work and government of states and nations, that men should learn to place confidence in others, and that they should learn to justify the confidence which is reposed in them.

It will be seen at once what a wonderful and excellent school in this respect for social and national life is afforded by the Christian home. It must be injurious to society, injurious to men's sense of truth, to their feeling of the necessity of guarding the deepest

exercise of confidence, viz., the confidence required when man and woman are made one in marriage, if the indissoluble bond, as divinely appointed, is treated lightly by the laws of a country, or by the public opinion which helps to frame those laws.

The sanctity of married life, then, when it is made to conform, as far as possible, with Divine teaching, is not only a sacred duty in itself, but has a positive importance in preparing citizens for a right discharge of social and national duties.

(4) Further, the Christian home, as founded upon Holy Marriage, is calculated to train the young to see their way through some of the more obvious difficulties and perplexities which, in our state of trial here, necessarily present themselves at some time or other to the minds of thoughtful and responsible beings. In the Christian home we drink in a sense of the value of justice, of the chivalrous duty of protecting the weak, of self-sacrifice in obedience to lawful command, of readiness to put aside personal objects for the benefit of the whole family; whilst the stern and severe principles of rectitude, right-doing, and self-forgetfulness are purified by human affection and the sense of religion. Thus we may well believe that Christian family life gradually trains to manhood or womanhood in such a way that there is real gentleness, tenderness, considerateness, kindness; whilst, at the same time, there is an absence of mere weakening sentiment, or of that failure in moral strength which incapacitates us from feeling moral indignation against wrong.

On the whole, then, looking at the social and national effects of home-life, especially (perhaps we

may say without undue self-exaltation) in England, there is good reason to believe that, when we are faithful to its principles, it is blest by God for our guidance in the perplexities which must meet us all in the larger arena of the world, and blest also in training us, not indeed to forsake the principle that 'charity begins at home,' but to remember that charity does not end there, and so to fit us for carrying in our own souls an ever-deepening sense of the claims of the universal family and the sacred call to do our duty as man to man.



## CHAPTER XXII

### THE ENGLISH TRADITION OF HOME AND MARRIAGE

THE word ‘Home,’ as we use it, has its own peculiar meaning for our race. It is difficult to express that meaning, although it is deeply felt by the English people. It comprehends the whole assembly of affections and associations and memories and hopes that go the most nearly to our hearts. This feeling of home is shared, in a great measure, by the Germans. ‘Love for home,’ it has been said by a distinguished German writer, ‘and pride in home, are deeply imprinted in the German character; and when the Englishman proudly says that his house is his castle, it is the German spirit which speaks by his mouth—the same spirit which, among ourselves, calls domestic authority an unquestionable one, and looks upon home as an inviolable sanctuary.’<sup>1</sup>

This is indeed true, for a great deal of this and kindred feeling belongs to the whole Teutonic family. We have been taught by historians of the past that even before Christianity touched the Teutonic peoples, there were certain virtues with which God seems to have endowed them in a pre-eminent degree. It has

<sup>1</sup> Luthardt, *Moral Truths of Christianity*, p. 135.

been pointed out that there were among them such virtues—that is, forms of manly strength—as those which connect themselves with truth, both the inclination to search for truth and the habit of speaking only what was believed to be true, and that there was, further, ‘the regard generally for what is real, substantial, genuine, solid,’ and ‘a distrust, sometimes extreme, of theories, of intellectual subtleties, of verbal accuracy—the taste for plainness and simplicity of life and manners and speech,—the strong sense of justice, large, unflinching, consistent; the power and will to be fair . . . the impatience of affectation and pretence; not merely the disgust or amusement, but the deep moral indignation, at shams and imposture—the dislike of over-statement and exaggeration; the fear of professing too much; the shame and horror of seeming to act a part; the sacrifice of form to substance; the expectation and demand that a man should say what he really means . . . that unforced and honest modesty both of intellect and conduct, which comes naturally to any man who takes a true measure of himself and his doings.’<sup>1</sup>

It has been asserted also that to this race belonged really serious thoughts about the use and meaning of life; that it placed a high value upon hard work, upon liberty, upon the sense of responsibility, upon moral strength, ‘steadiness, endurance, perseverance’; upon the power and will to bear steadily, and even cheerfully, even accumulated disappointments and defeat; and a habit of not unduly exalting trifles. We cannot but feel about this race, as we read of it

<sup>1</sup> Church, *The Gifts of Civilisation*, pp. 321, 322.

in history, and to some extent (without undue boasting) as we see it now, that it possesses great self-command, and fearlessness in doing what it believes to be right in the face of opposition and adverse opinion, and holding reason and conscience in the highest value, so as not to be blinded into the betrayal of convictions by the mere voice of propriety or authority. To quote again, it is a true saying that 'all these are such qualities as spring from the deep and pervading belief that this life is a place of trial, probation, discipline, effort, to be followed by a real judgment.'<sup>1</sup>

We have already spoken of the mysterious power and meaning of law, and there is no doubt that respect for law has been a mark of the Teutonic race. They have known how to rule, because they have known how to obey, when obedience was seen to be a duty, submitting private interests to the public weal, and sacrificing self, when necessary, to higher claims in the keen battle of life. It has also been noticed, and witnessed to by history, that they have had a very high respect for the virtue of purity and all that surrounds it. It is not meant indeed—very far from it—that this high and difficult virtue has always been maintained throughout the Teutonic race, but it has been and it is respected even by those who have sinned against it; so that it would seem to be a very grave departure from the natural endowments of the race if it were anywhere largely to permit the blatant and cynical expressions of moral evil touching this virtue which are unhappily found in some of the later representatives of the Latin races. These forms of virtue, as we have in part already remembered,

<sup>1</sup> Church, *The Gifts of Civilisation*, p. 323.



have sprung to a great degree from home-life, as it has been developed and has taken form in the Teutonic peoples; and, on the other hand, they have gone far to make family life such a sacred and noble thing as it undoubtedly has been and is. German and English households have been called, and rightly, 'schools of goodness in its strongest and its gentlest forms,' and also 'shrines of love, and holiness, and peace, the sacred places where man's deepest gladness and deepest griefs—never, in truth, very far apart—meet and are sheltered.'<sup>1</sup> Out of all these things there has grown a special and characteristic view of the value and meaning of home-life in England.

There are points about this which it is necessary to dwell upon:—

(1) It has been felt very specially by our race that marriage ought to be a matter of unfettered choice—'the free choice by the man of the woman, and the free assent of the woman to the choice he has made.'<sup>2</sup> Of course, in every act of choice there comes in the sense of responsibility. This act implies very grave responsibility, because the happiness and welfare of others depend so much upon it. This has been felt very deeply in England. It has given a sacredness and a beauty to love which have been very widespread, often even among the less cultivated classes. The general English feeling has been, that although questions of prudence and the like must not be disregarded, marriage ought to be a matter of real affection. That—with, of course, large allowance for failures in it—has been and is very deeply

<sup>1</sup> Church, *The Gifts of Civilisation*, p. 324.

<sup>2</sup> *The Christian Home*, p. 20.

felt by the English people. As a nation—a nation which is above all things serious—there has been a genuine feeling that man is not only a creature of sense, not only a divinely-appointed instrument for continuing the race, but that he is a moral and a spiritual being. ‘Therefore that which lies at the very root of his life, on which depends so much of his discipline, on which is founded the best school of goodness, from which springs so much holy joy and sanctifying sorrow, from which arises “the delirium of our delighting and the passion of our pain,” from which proceeds so much that is most blessed in our human pilgrimage, so many of our brightest hopes, so many of our sweetest and saddest memories, must also rest upon a virtue which is moral and spiritual.’<sup>1</sup> There is something very real therefore and very deep in that which has taken such hold on the mind of our country, that marriage ought to be a matter of affection, and that the love of lovers ought to be a very real thing and deep, not mere passing fancy, but having in it the elements of romance and chivalry and real respect, which make it so beautiful when it is true to itself, and one of the highest joys that is possible for human life.

(2) And from the same national characteristics has come the very deep sense of the sacredness of marriage as the expansion and deepening of all that has gone before. There can be no doubt that this has been felt very strongly by the English people. The whole of the Western Church—as we saw in a former chapter—has had an intense conviction of this sacredness of marriage. It has been truer to that

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Home*, pp. 21, 22.

conviction all through, with whatever slips here and there, than the Eastern Church when subjected to the temptations arising from secular interference and Court pressure. No part of the Western Church, however, has been so thoroughly loyal to the sacredness of marriage and the indissolubility of the marriage bond as the Church of England. This is brought out all the more by unhappy evasions in modern times of her plain teachings. Doubtless, the very temperament and traditions of the Teutonic race have helped providentially to strengthen and deepen that which has also come to our people by the teaching of Christianity. On this has rested the peculiar English feeling as to home.

(3) Consistently with this temper, it is quite true, as has been asserted, that amongst the English race 'it is not law and order, or even a community of interests, that keeps the members of a family together, but it is' what we call family feeling—the natural feeling that arises out of the sense of a common origin of individual lives which so 'forms the soul of domestic life.'<sup>1</sup> This feeling is of the kind that would have been described as *pietas* among the Romans, and it tends to render sacred to English hearts the traditions, customs, and ways of the family. In each family these are modified and changed and re-formed to a certain degree by the contributions which come from each of the parents. All that is ennobling for national life from its respect for its history, in home life is ennobled by this atmosphere of domestic tradition. As we have already noticed in a former chapter, such feelings and thoughts go wrong and are injurious if they are

<sup>1</sup> Luthardt, *Moral Truths of Christianity*, p. 136.



allowed to degenerate into corporate selfishness, but true and right family feeling has quite the opposite effect. The sense of the sacredness and sweetness of home enlarges the heart and enables it to take in the thoughts of others with a true affection and a true respect. Nothing has helped more towards the peculiar strength and sweetness, and also largeness and charity towards others, than this deeply English family feeling.

(4) The sense of the value and sacredness of the early love of man and woman, the sense, growing out of that, of the value and sacredness of marriage, contribute then beyond all things to this family feeling which so deeply marks our race, and which trains us for a ready love to others; for in our family life, wherever it is, according to the traditions of our race, two important forces have play. One is the active power of early affections. The other is a deep respect for authority. The early affections are trained, of course, in their different degrees—as we have already seen—by the various relations in which we find ourselves placed in family life. To stunt those affections, not to allow them to have their proper play, not to guide them, not to respect them as God's own intended means of training, is to fail—and so it is felt—to rise to the English idea of home. In the same way, for parents to forget in any measure the duty of exercising loving authority is not only wrong in itself, and disloyal towards God's commands, but is a departure from the true English temper and tradition as to home-life. Sometimes it is feared that a sense of the duty of exercising loving authority is not so clear and strong in modern times as it was, and that in

consequence the love of children is not always so respectful as it should be towards parents at home, or to those who stand in any relation of loving authority towards them. This may be more or less true, but in a matter of this kind we must be careful not to exaggerate. Certain details of manner change with the change of years and circumstances, but the real manner, in its true sense, need not change. It is quite true that fifty years ago or so an English parent was approached by his son with a very distant respect. If he was loved, he was certainly greatly feared, and he constantly enforced his will as absolute law in a trenchant way. A good deal of this had to do with the peculiar habits and stiffness of the time. There was often then as real love as now, but manners were more stiff. There was often then a real danger of love being supplanted by fear; and where this was the case, a father often lost the opportunities of that unrivalled influence with his sons which comes to those naturally and necessarily for whom respect and reverence are not turned into mere fear, because of the play of a very strong and considerate affection. It may be that sometimes in later days there are instances where parents show what has been called a 'good-natured indifference to plain moral obligations,' where a parent has failed to rule and guide his son, as he is bound to do, and the son has learnt in consequence a want of that respect which will never be divorced from love if a parent fulfils his duties. Still, whatever failures on one side or the other there may have been in the past or may be in the present, there is no doubt that the general temper of the English nature—deepened indeed and illuminated by Christian

revelation—means a very real love of father to child, and child to father, the one exalted by the sense of responsibility, the other by the sense of respect. Nothing more than this, perhaps, has helped to create the peculiar and ennobling tone of the English idea of home and marriage. Holy Scripture, which holds up before us in its terribly honest way instructive examples in life, reminds us, in the case of Isaac and his sons, and still more in the sad story of Eli and his sons, how the right temper is sure to fail in the children if the parent—however good in other ways—forgets this first and great responsibility. ‘Honour thy father and thy mother,’<sup>1</sup> side by side with ‘Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged,’<sup>2</sup> brings before us in the short clear-cut words of Scripture those responsibilities which, if remembered and treated with loyal obedience, produce that very home temper which on the whole we have such reason to thank God for in England.

It is not meant that this is altogether and exclusively English. Of course not. Nevertheless, it is peculiarly so. There are good parents and good children, loving and loyal to one another, doubtless, in other nations, but we cannot help noticing a difference on the whole. Partly from climate, partly from the peculiar gifts of heredity, there are many foreign nations which naturally live a life that may be described as social rather than domestic. This does not exclude domestic affection, but it makes its tone different, and to us (as it appears) not so deep and lasting. It is a curious fact that, among the Latin nations, the Italians are probably the most like ourselves. There are, indeed, many

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xx. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Col. iii. 21 ; cf. Eph. vi. 4.



differences, but there are certain points of considerable resemblance. In political matters, for instance, they seem to have something of British patience and staying power; and in some parts of Italy, at least among the Tuscans and the Romans, especially the strong and simple shepherds of the Abruzzi, there is something of the same kind of home feeling which is so conspicuous in Englishmen. To take an example—although, of course, an especially lofty example—there are traits most strikingly English in the character of Michael Angelo. His life was one of intense labour. He valued hard work. There was an austerity and gravity about it which had some resemblance to such men as our own Milton. He lived with wonderful frugality, and threw himself with concentrated attention and devotion into all his many different occupations. He lived a very solitary life. Circumstances led him to that. It is probable that he never knew the love of woman, except in quite late life, in the form of that high and beautiful friendship which existed between himself and Vittoria Colonna. Although necessarily much thrown upon himself, there were domestic virtues about him which one might call thoroughly English. He was intensely fond of little children. He was the kindest of masters to his servants. His brothers tried him in many ways, and his indignation against their misconduct was sometimes strong and passionate, but he showed great affection towards them and great generosity. Nothing is more touching in this man of such gigantic and varied gifts of genius than his filial devotion to his father. When the old man was dangerously ill in the year 1516, he wrote to his brother ‘in

much distress and fear': 'I would by all means wish,' he says, 'to see him again before he dies, even if I should die with him. . . . Arrange that nothing whatever is wanting to him needful to his soul and of the Sacraments of the Church, and let him settle what we are to do for the good of his soul (*i.e.* after his death); of the things needful to the body see that he wants for nothing, for I have worked only for him, to help him in his need, before he dies. Arrange so that thy wife shall attend him lovingly; I will restore to all of you whatever is required.'

It is true that this is the example of a very remarkable man; but the same tone of piety is often found amongst ordinary members of his race, which has about it a good deal of likeness to our English temper.

(5) And then, again, in English home-life—owing, we may be quite sure, in a great measure to the respect for early love and for the sacredness of the marriage bond—there is much of the temper which above all is beautiful in human character, especially in the characters of men, an alliance of strength and tenderness. As a race we do not always show our feelings readily before the world, but in the most reserved natures—reserved even to a fault—those feelings can be very tender and very strong with regard to all the objects of affection who are brought closest to our hearts. A general characteristic of the English home, on the one hand, may be said to be its manliness. It is the training ground for independence of character in the right sense. It is in the affections exercised in the circle of our homes, and of those we love and most closely connect with them,

that the true sort of egotism is learnt. Each learns to fill his own place in relation to others, and therefore learns the necessity of that quiet strength which comes to those who are more and more guided by principles established in their own souls. In our homes there is much of that true independence, which is never an uprising against authority duly exercised, much less a failure of all that is due to love from love; but rather the deepening sense of how each must do his duty in consequence of the wonderful blessings that he has received from all. In the same way, the English home is a teacher of generosity. The habit of 'give and take' is not of the class of a *quid pro quo*, but it more and more becomes the natural happiness of those who love one another. A failure in generosity mars terribly a manly character, for that failure implies want of gratitude and want of considerateness. To fail in gratitude to those to whom we owe it so pre-eminently, is an ignoble trait; it means weakness and selfishness; to fail in considerateness is indeed serious selfishness where it should be absent most. But the English home has the way of producing those virtues which go towards manliness. In the same direction it leads to courage. The whole tone and temper of our homes, especially in our own times, enables the sons of a home to be not only sons, but also in a sense brothers of their father, and they drink in that chivalrous sense of protection for those who are weaker, and learn from the quiet but assured expectation in their parents and in their sisters that they will in all things play the man—that high and quiet courage which, morally as well as physically, is expected of men by the English



people. Whilst this is so, and seems to have been passed on in our race from the earliest days, there goes with it in all true English home-life that tenderness and gentleness which comes, not only from civilisation and the softening of manners, but from high traditions about those deep things of affection and intercourse, of which Englishmen and Englishwomen may not perhaps speak much to the world, but which none the less they very deeply feel.

But, on the whole, the peculiar character of the English home is that it is felt to be, by all who have to do with it in our nation, the resting-place, the place of retreat from the noisier world and the struggles of life, which come to us all. There are certainly two sides to every nature, but this is specially true of our race. There are 'two soul-sides, one to face the world with,'<sup>1</sup> and one to show to those who are most intimate with us and most dear to us. In outer society it is of necessity that we are not, in the inner workings of ourselves, thrown open to the inspection of mankind. There are secrets of the soul which, in the midst of the world, we do well to keep, and must necessarily cherish. The forms and ways and courteous manners of society are not—when they are what they may well be and ought to be—mere masks to conceal ourselves behind, but proper channels for expressing ourselves in what we owe to others. In social intercourse there may be the true and necessary manner. Home-life has also a manner of its own. It is not that there ever ought to be, or can be, if it is true home-life, any lack of courtesy, especially of the protecting respect of

<sup>1</sup> Browning, *One Word More*, xvii.

man to woman, and the loving dependence of woman on man ; but it is that there are parts of ourselves, of our deeper natures as well as our lighter, which are felt to be naturally due to those who are very dear to us. This kind of temper specially marks the English home.

(6) It is to be noted also that a very strong characteristic of the English, or indeed the Teutonic way, of feeling about home and using it is that there is among us an immense power in old memories. The influence, and the comfort, and the delight—though, of course, being human, a delight often tempered with sadness—of a true English home is a powerful factor in each of our lives, long after that home has ceased to be. Every true and every thoughtful character is built up by a wise use of experiences, and the experiences of the past in the sacred shelter of home are ever deepened and made more effective by the cherishing of loving memories.

Now, if there be any truth in all this, the important thing from our point of view in studying the question, is that of the vast consequences not merely to the nation, of which we have spoken, but to humanity at large, of preserving and guarding all that has been of such excellence and power in the home-life of our race. Every race has its own gifts, and there is no self-righteousness or undue exaltation of ourselves above others if we recognise with gratitude such gifts as we have, in God's goodness, inherited from our ancestors, and which have been reinforced and purified by the Christian religion. Against any desecration of home and marriage no people are bound to be more on their guard than the English people ; and

this not only on account of the dangerous national consequences sure to follow from any such desecration or degradation, but also because it is an act of folly, as well as of ingratitude, not to preserve with care what we all feel to be a specially precious gift, and it is worse than folly to allow anything to mar—in so far as we can prevent it—what has hitherto been certainly the resting-place for our deepest and most ennobling affections, as well as the earliest school—whose lessons are remembered when all others are forgotten—of that special form of high individual excellence, which it would appear that God intends to be cultivated by, and shown in the lives of, the English people.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### MARRIAGE IN RELATION TO HUMANITY AND IMMORTALITY

MARRIAGE, as we have seen, is of Divine origin, placed under Divine sanction, and—if it is to be true—must be within the limitations and conditions laid down by God.

From it comes, in its best form, the circle of home—that little world, that microcosm—which forms the unit to be recognised by all Christian social morality. The home possesses its own traditions. Tradition is one of the most important mysteries in human life; in it we recognise the fact that there is handed on the chain of thoughts, feelings, opinions, facts, with a special colour of their own, by which generation is linked to generation. The home is the centre of custom—of that ‘use and wont’ which guard the portals of the house. There are infinite shades of difference between the traditions and customs of different homes, but they are all like streams, merging at last in a wider ocean, and helping to form the character of its contents—the character of the nation, of society generally, and especial views and feelings about the larger entity, humanity.

For in every truly Christian home, springing from Christian marriage, there is recognised the sacredness of individual life and individual character, and the close relation between, and the serious duties of, one to another. In a truly Christian home, therefore, there must be an appeal to conscience, and that appeal helps to quicken the power and enlighten the action of conscience. It is just this appeal which, above all, wakes up in men and women the sense of their place in the human family, of their duties towards each member in it, of their recognition of the loving authority of the Father of us all.

Again, in the home as conceived by Christianity, there is the constant play of influence. We find it difficult to define, but easy to understand the subtle force of one life and character upon another. The meaning of this is learnt in home-life, and its power, necessity, and responsibility are gradually felt to be very great in dealing with other human beings, not bound to us by the more special and closest ties. To learn, at first unconsciously and only by feeling, without being able to recognise or measure the meaning and necessity of influence, in the inner circle of home is thus to be trained to true thoughts and large duties towards humanity.

And then, again, of course, all this comes surrounded by the atmosphere of human affection. It is in this way that gradually there has been, under the influence of the Christian home, in civilised nations, a certain softening of anything that was too hard or fierce in manners, and greater gentleness towards mankind at large. The kindly institutions of Christendom, the ready efforts to make provision

for those who are cast out into the world without their natural protectors, spring, to a very large extent, from a deep sense of the sacredness of home, and therefore of the need to supply its place—so far as that can be done—by the best substitutes possible for those intended to be teachers and protectors by the Divine institution of marriage.

It is thus that the importance of marriage and home-life is felt, in creating right thoughts and ideas as to human nature.

It is at once interesting and pathetic to notice how the philosophers of the past, both of Greece and of Rome, were seeking after practical principles to guide them in the conduct of life, both towards the soul itself and towards others. They—some of them in a very remarkable degree—were aware of the duties of kindness, of the fact that a certain manner ought to be cultivated towards others, as the expression and encouragement of the just and due feelings of the heart.

We all know that in so far as we are fallen beings, there is a tendency to disunion; but the high touch of Divinity within us, and the voice of God speaking in one way or another, and in one degree or another, to all men, have kept alive more or less a desire for something quite the reverse of that. Together with much that was narrow, and much that was exclusive among the Greeks, larger thoughts were not wanting; *ὁ κόσμος ὡσανεὶ πόλις ἔστιν*,<sup>1</sup> was the expression of a thought of the essential unity of mankind. Among the Romans, this was probably more widely felt and more generally

<sup>1</sup> 'The world is even as a city.'



accepted from the teaching of their philosophers, even though they borrowed it from the Greeks, because the expansion of the Empire tended to give men larger views. Other races were gradually included in the world-wide embrace of Rome, and the idea of the world-empire took possession of men's minds, and lasted on, long after the thing itself had passed away. We cannot doubt that the prevalence of these ideas, as of the facts out of which they arose, formed part of God's providential training of mankind to receive the thought of the kingdom of Christ. Certain it is, that as the Roman Empire went on—notwithstanding all of a different tendency—the minds of the more enlightened became more used to the idea of humanity as a great fact to be thought of. The more exclusive thoughts failed to satisfy, and wider thoughts of things were taking possession of higher minds. 'Humanity, a universal order, the great polity, its aristocracy of elect spirits, the mastery of their example over their successors,—these were the stimulating ideas, the abstract intellectual conceptions, by association with which the Stoic . . . tried to elevate, and unite into a single principle, men's moral efforts.' This was said of the times of Marcus Aurelius; and long before that, we have the great saying, '*Homo sum : humani nihil a me alienum puto.*'<sup>1</sup> In the desire of higher minds in those times, there was felt to be a connection, a necessary connection, between efforts for individual perfection and larger thoughts of the human race. To quote again : 'The moral development of the individual may well

<sup>1</sup> 'Human myself, I claim kinship with all that is human' (Terence, *Heauton-timoroumenos*, I. i. 25).

follow the tendency of that larger current, and permit its flights and heats, its *élans*, as the French say, only so much freedom of play as may be consistent with full sympathy with, and a full practical assent to, the moral preferences of that "great majority," which exercises the authority of humanity and is actually a vast force all around us.'

It was thus that men were groping towards a more generous view of the human race, and the consequent duties of one to another. In so far as they received light on this subject, they were, of course, learning from God, and preparing for a true grasp of fuller teaching. It has been well said that—

'Perhaps all theories of morals tend, as they rise to their best, and as conceived by their worthiest disciples, to identification with each other; the most unlikely neighbours meeting at some point higher than any one of them. For the variety of men's possible reflections on their experience, as of that experience itself, is not really as great as it seems; and as the highest and most disinterested of ethical *formulae*, filtering down into men's actual everyday existence, reach the same poor level of vulgar egotism; so we may fairly suppose that all the highest spirits, from whatever contrasted points they may have started, would yet be found to entertain, in their moral consciousness as actually realised, much the same kind of company . . . to have all of them alike the same savour of unworldliness.'

There were very noble phases in the old traditional ethics. There was much in that ancient past which was of the highest—a grave conception of life, a 'pursuit after nothing less than a perfection,' a true

‘apprehension of the value of time,’ the passion and the seriousness which are alike a consecration—*la passion et le sérieux qui consacrent*. The idea of humanity had enlarged. Philosophers and the thoughtful admitted it more and more to their minds. It remained, however, for Christianity to carry it deeply to the heart of the people.

Our later times are not altogether unlike the closing days of the Empire. Deep thinkers have pointed out that both in faults and in virtues there are strong points of resemblance. Men have been driven to think deeply and seriously of the foundation questions of life. Nothing has been taken for granted; old beliefs have been torn up by the roots and examined with almost brutal minuteness. This, however, is clear, that even where definite Christian faith may not be strong, and old moorings have gone, still the atmosphere of centuries of Christian belief and practice has had its effect. Modern philosophies cannot neglect altruism—or, in plainer phrase, ‘my duty towards my neighbour.’ The respect for humanity is by no means shaken.

Schemes of various kinds have been brought forward from time to time in this direction. France has been especially rich in them. ‘Liberty, equality, fraternity,’ was the rallying-cry of the Revolution. ‘Communism’ has been a considerable factor in recent times. But the remarkable point is that an effort is evident in them all to express a belief that there is a human family. M. Comte was the distinguished founder of the ‘Religion of Humanity.’ He taught in his philosophy that man passed through a period of infancy, when he accepted a theological explanation



of all things ; that he then advanced through a period of metaphysical ideas, and finally reached the *positive* period, when all is strictly scientific. From this he deduced his 'Religion of Humanity.' This, strange to say, appears seriously to be believed in and used by a number of persons, otherwise sane, though to worship collective humanity would be to worship some good and a vast mass of evil, and to worship the idea of humanity would be to worship an unsubstantial shadow. The 'Religion of Humanity' is indeed to the mind of a Christian a grotesque perversion ; still, Comte, in his philosophy and in his 'Religion,' bears witness to a real truth and a longing of mankind. There is a longing for real truth, and there is a longing for fellowship. There is also a vision of truth in early days which may lead on to fuller satisfaction and more absolute fact. Comte might, consciously or unconsciously, lead men to think theology a delusion, and metaphysical speculation a dream, though a dream leading to waking, and hard brutal material practical things the one reality. Still he witnesses to longings of a different kind. This has been well expressed as follows :—

It is 'the practical denial of God, not faith in Him, [which] makes us afraid that if we seek we shall not find, if we knock it will not be opened to us. Those nursery prayers which the Club sage thinks were so good for the child, so inappropriate to the man, ought to be so regarded if the man's ultimate vocation is to get all he can for himself. But in that ripest period he will look back upon his childhood, and fancy it must have been the sunniest and most blessed moment of his existence, because he cherished delusions which

have passed for ever away. Whereas, if his vocation is to know truth and to be true, he may have then had his first glimpse of the vista which through ages upon ages he is to explore. He may have been shown who would be his guide through the bewildering but most needful and precious questionings respecting himself and his fellows into which he enters as he grows older; he may feel that he first knows the full need of his mother's lessons when he grapples with the mysteries either of the outward universe or of human society.'<sup>1</sup>

It is thus that all the philosophies and theories bring us back—if we learn and as we learn anything wide and true of humanity—to the initial teachings and mystery of family life.

Christianity alone had fully answered the 'obstinate questionings' of the earlier philosophies. A Christian atmosphere has deeply affected the later. More and more, as the Christian teaching on home and its foundations has prevailed, have truer conceptions grown among men of the greatness, and sorrows, and faults, and destinies of human beings, and of the close bonds by which, in reality, they are united, and which should be recognised even among all the sins and follies of mankind.

For, whatever whispers of these things came to the children of the ancient world, Christianity spoke in a clear voice that could not be misunderstood. It proclaimed a Kingdom. It taught of that sway which it acknowledged as being over all men and over each man, ruling in the thoughts, intentions, and will from which spring the actions of life. But it went further. The Supreme King was the Father

<sup>1</sup> Maurice, *Social Morality*, p. 420.

of them all. He had a care for the evil and the good, for the just and the unjust. They sprang from His will, and He desired more and more to make them like Himself, more and more to bring to them a share in His goodness. Christianity enlarged and brought home the voices of the older revelation. 'Delight thou in the Lord, and He shall give thee thy heart's desire. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.'<sup>1</sup> The idea of a family as well as of a kingdom was prominent. 'Children, ye have a Father,' it was always saying to men. The great Elder Brother spoke to them of their Father. He said He had come to show them the Father, to show forth His works, His character. The 'Loving Spirit' was revealed to them, the Bond of the love of the Father and the Son. When the Christian Society received that Spirit on 'the Birthday of the Christian Church,' they acted as brothers, they felt as a family with common possessions and a common home. As the Highest and Holiest was revealed as a Father of all mankind, as the Christian Church was, in a special sense, the family realising and using its privileges, so it consecrated all common things and all human relations. The deepest of all was the true relation of man and woman, and with this, the necessary relations springing from it; and thus Holy Marriage, with its mystery, its sacredness, its bond as indissoluble as the bond of the Godhead, and as the relation of Christ and His Church, witnessed to and taught the sacred claim of humanity—of the family of man.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxxvii. 4, 5.



Thus Christianity could not leave human life alone. Other systems might disregard human needs and allow the vagaries of human caprice. Not so Christianity. It made the attempt to guide all life, personal and social. It was bound, therefore, to touch the deepest relations, and it was certain, in consequence, to bring 'not peace, but a sword.'<sup>1</sup> Individualism in a fallen race is selfishness. Social effort, and the stern sacrifice of individual desire or whim, is Christian. Just as formerly, so now, the effort to put aside the indissoluble character of Marriage is a sin against human society, is anti-social and anti-Christian. No Christian Church can have anything to do with it; no Christian teacher may condone it; the claim of the human family must be recognised as a stronger claim than that of individual caprice. Holy Marriage calls us to recognise the sacred claim of humanity.

And as Marriage—according to Christian teaching—lies at the root of rightly ordered human life now, so it teaches serious lessons as to immortality.

Nothing—it is universally felt—can mark the difference between the ancient and the Christian world more than the position in the thought of each as to our life beyond the grave.

In the old world there were indeed dreams, imaginations, misty visions of another life; 'but what serious man in his most serious thinking ever dreamt of looking forward, in his real hopes and practical purposes, beyond what he could see and know of life?'<sup>2</sup> Christianity changed all this. It boldly taught

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. x. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Church, *Cathedral and University Sermons*, p. 296.

men that this life—wonderful, interesting, startling, important as it is—is only the outer chamber, the first beginning of the real and great life in the unimagined future. It might have appealed, and did appeal, to many considerations leading to such a conclusion, but the proof of it lay in ‘one decisive, incontestable fact. One who announced Himself as the Conqueror of Death, and the Giver of Life Eternal, had verified his words, had done what no living man had done. He had come back to earth from among the dead.’<sup>1</sup> This changed and exalted everything. Naturally enough, at first, the surprise and shock of this vast revolution led men to depreciate the present life. Vast sacrifices, immense and unique efforts had to be made in founding the Christian Church; but as time went on, and Christianity more and more gripped the world, the settled order of life was seen to be God’s providential arrangement, and the things needful for this life were not swept away, but raised to a higher level, and made to give out their full meaning.

Thus in marriage and family life there was always a teaching and witness of immortality—that life is closely connected with the thought of succession. The father and mother alike look back to those from whom they have sprung. Converging lines of an inexhaustible past meet in their children. In these is embodied to them not only the past, but also the witness of an indefinite future.

This was further exalted in Christianity. If the revelation of Christ taught one virtue more than another, it was love. Its marvels, its magnificence,

<sup>1</sup> Church, *Cathedral and University Sermons*, p. 299.

its possible depth, its purifying power,—all gained new emphasis from the manifestation of Eternal Love in the mysterious and heart-moving sacrifice of the Cross. The sense of immortality ever near mankind was deepened, purified, exalted, placed in clearer light in the mystery of marriage, when the union of man and woman was seen to signify and represent the union of God with man as an outcome of Eternal Love. The awakening in the minds of men and women the sense of God's tender, fatherly, thoughtful, self-sacrificing love, the sense of His longing for union with His creature, lifted marriage to a higher level and brought out its full teaching, and so taught by it, with greater emphasis, the fact of immortality; for love and union, as revealed by God in Christianity, are eternal things.

Our Lord when confronted with a supposed difficulty by the unbelievers of His own day as to the marriage relation in the other world, declared that there they 'neither marry, nor are given in marriage,' but 'are equal unto the angels.'<sup>1</sup> The difficulty which His opponents intended to raise was, however, only grounded on the physical aspect of marriage. That indeed would cease when the 'spiritual,' not the 'natural,' body should clothe the immortal being. But our Lord did not teach that the consequences of solemn human relations would be annihilated; and deep as the mystery is, and impenetrable as the veil is—in many respects—between time and eternity; and impossible as it is for us—the creatures of sense and time—to imagine a condition of things when sense and time shall be no more—still it remains

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke xx, 35, 36.



true, Holy Marriage is meant to be a restraint on human caprice, a power of discipline for human passion, a training in love by the due fulfilling of the claims of serious relations between souls ; and as we know that love is eternal, is the very essence of God's life, Holy Marriage points to a deepening of all true earthly affection, and a drawing closer of all sacred human ties beyond the grave.

The work of the Church, as time goes on, seems to us to become more complicated, more exacting. Whether our own part of the Church is rising to her opportunities and the calls which come to her is an anxious question, not easily answered. The purifying power of God's punishments may hang over us for neglected opportunities, stilted stiffness, undue respect for 'the world,' as conceived by S. John, a powerful want in the sense of the supernatural. On the other hand, there are many things to cheer us on, whatever there may be to chill and to depress. If there are darker doubts, there is deeper faith ; if there are more startling questionings, there is, probably, greater sincerity, greater earnestness, and amongst many, less of mere respectability, and a more manly religion. 'God accomplishes His purposes in many ways, and one of them we know, by the highest of all examples, is the way of what seems irretrievable disaster.'<sup>1</sup> 'While we are here between the limits of birth and death, God, our Master, sends us forth, not to conquer, but to work.'<sup>2</sup> He sends us forth to be faithful. With principle we must not palter. Results we leave to God. Faithful

<sup>1</sup> Church, *Cathedral and University Sermons*, p. 252.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

action, with loyalty to principle—*that* is in our own hands. Remembering the vastness of the issues, there is nothing as to which the Church must be more loyal, more unmovable, than in her unfaltering witness to the sacredness of Holy Marriage; the indissolubility of the marriage bond; and the need for any society, for any nation, of struggling to preserve uncontaminated the tender sanctities of home.





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